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Cedar Springs Place:

Housing, Citizenship, and City-making in Centennial Dallas

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Cedar Springs Place:

Housing, Citizenship, and City-making in Centennial Dallas

by

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Abstract

Cedar Springs Place:

Housing, Citizenship, and City-making in Centennial Dallas

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Cedar Springs Place (1935-37), a public housing development designed by Walter Sharp and the Dallas Housing Associates, was built under the auspices of New Deal progressivism alongside the 1936 Texas Centennial. A modern complex with an emphasis on public space, Cedar Springs was built for white residents on a vacant land parcel at the city's edge. Originally lauded as a slum eradication project for Depression-era Dallas, the narrative behind Cedar Springs is problematized when seen through a larger landscape perspective. Although the design, programming, and promotion of Cedar Springs Place was reformist in nature, the gradual conception, planning, and building of the development suggests how the project became less about ameliorating the lives of Dallas' poor and more about paying homage to a set of ideals that did not necessarily match the building in practice. Cedar Springs bespeaks both progressive action and inequitable inaction, including a failed project for African American residents and the inability to actually replace a slum community, a disparity that belies Dallas' moniker as

the “City of Opportunity.” As a case study, Cedar Springs Place speaks to the tension between ideology and practice in architectural production, and further calls into question notions of access and opportunity—both spatial and architectural—in 1930s Dallas.

Cedar Springs Place:
Housing, Citizenship, and City-making in Centennial Dallas

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Administration (25 December 1935). H-7901-B. Record Group 196: PWA 1933-36. National Archives at College Park, MD.

Figure 9C. Strauss, Michael W. & Talbott Wegg. “Home on the One-time Range.” In *Housing Comes of Age*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1938.

Figure 10. Dallas Housing Associates. Floor Plans. Architectural drawing. Public Works Administration (25 December 1935). H-7901-B. Record Group 196: PWA 1933-36. National Archives at College Park, MD.

Figure 11. Dallas Housing Associates. Community Center, Elevation. Architectural drawing. Public Works Administration (25 December 1935). H-7901-B. Record Group 196: PWA 1933-36. National Archives at College Park, MD.

Figure 12. Dallas Housing Associates. Heating Plant, Elevation. Architectural drawing. Public Works Administration (25 December 1935). H-7901-B. Record Group 196: PWA 1933-36. National Archives at College Park, MD.

Figure 13. Charles Eames, the Dean House (Mason, Webster Groves, MO). Photograph by Andrew Raimist. Image courtesy of the photographer.

Figure 14A. *Dallas, Texas* [map]. 1927. Vol. 6, Key No. 2. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

Figure 14B. *Dallas, Texas* [map]. 1927. Vol. 7, Sheet No. 706. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

Figure 15. "Old Parkland Hospital Area, Oak Lawn Avenue - Maple Avenue (Labeled)." 1930-10. Dallas Historical Aerial Photographs, Edwin J. Foscue Map Library, Southern Methodist University.

Figure 16. “Buildings to be Swept Away for Housing Project Park.” *Dallas Morning News* (11 August 1938).

Figure 17."Downtown Dallas (Labeled)."
Showing "State / Thomas / Hall African American Business - shopping area." 1930-10. Dallas Historical Aerial Photographs, Edwin J. Foscue Map Library, Southern Methodist University.

Figure 18A. *Dallas, Texas* [map]. 1921. Vol. 2, Sheet 221. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

Figure 18B. *Dallas, Texas* [map]. 1951. Vol. 1A, sheet 5A. ProQuest Digital Sanborn Map

Chapter 1. Introduction

On June 12, 1936, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt addressed a crowd of 52,000 people from a podium at the center of Dallas' Cotton Bowl Stadium.[1] "My friends of Texas," he began, "I have come here today to bear the tribute of the Nation to you on your hundredth birthday: for you are one hundred years' young!"[2] It was a fitting declaration for the start of the Texas Centennial Exposition, an event that FDR compared to Chicago's Century of Progress Fair and to San Diego's California International Exposition. In his speech, the president described Texas as a paragon of the country's larger democratic ideal, a state "tried by fire in these hundred years;"[3] delicately, FDR balanced the "Empire of Texas" with "the unity of the whole land."[4]

As the architect of America's New Deal policy, Roosevelt concluded his speech with a compelling declaration—"Men do not fight for boarding houses." Rather, "Men do fight and will fight for homes."[5] Just five miles north of the Centennial fairground, past Dallas' growing skyline, federal and local officials were busy fighting for just that: Cedar Springs Place (1936-1937), Texas' first public housing project, was in the midst of planning and development. In fact, on the same day of Roosevelt's speech, the *Dallas Morning News* announced a "Big Housing Contract" awarded to a local construction company for the project; the 181 dwelling units would be completed in a little over a year.[6] As part of the country's first public housing initiative, Cedar Springs Place was one

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[1] Texas Historical Commission, "FDR Salutes the Empire of Texas," in *The Medallion* (July/August 2011): 2.
[2] Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "Address of the President" (Texas Centennial Exposition, Dallas, Texas, 12 June 1936): 1.
[3] ibid., 2.
[4] ibid., 1.
[5] ibid., 7.
[6] "Big Housing Contract Awarded Dallas Firm," in *Dallas Morning News* (12 July 1936): 15.

of fifty-eight developments built by the Public Works Administration and the first public housing located west of the Mississippi. The extant project, which was originally restricted to white residents, features multi-family apartment units spread throughout twenty-eight simple, rectilinear structures. The austere buildings, arranged in rows across a massive lawn, cover twenty-three acres in what was then a peripheral, North Dallas neighborhood. Like other public housing projects across the country, Cedar Springs was presented as an antidote to Dallas' slum crisis and was widely touted by local and state newspapers as a "slum eradication" project intended to provide a "model housing colony." And despite being the first public housing unit in the state of Texas—let alone the entire southwestern region of the United States—the project has received limited academic study. In the wake of its introductory fanfare, Cedar Springs has continued its quiet existence as a local public housing property.

But when we start to unpack the project at a critical level, moving beyond the moniker of Texas' first public housing development, Cedar Springs Place reveals a larger tension between ideology and practice in architectural production. For although the design, programming, and promotion of Cedar Springs Place was steeped in the rhetoric of New Deal progressivism, the gradual conception, planning, and building of the development suggests how the project became less about ameliorating the lives of Dallas' poor and more about paying homage to a set of ideals that did not necessarily match the building in practice. Cedar Springs suggests how *imagined* and *real* architectural environments do not always add up. While the development tells one story of progressive growth, aspirational imagery, and access to opportunity, it does so selectively. For it also suggests a larger dialectic between built and unbuilt, served and underserved, ideology

and reality. Cedar Springs Place is in many ways a story of actions unrealized: how a comparable housing project for African Americans was stalled until the next decade, how Cedar Springs did not replace a slum district, and how a low-income project failed to house Dallas' truly destitute.

In order to grasp the implications of Cedar Springs Place, it is important to contextualize the project within the larger environment of 1930s Dallas. For the conception and design of Dallas' first "Housing Colony," as newspapers described it, occurred simultaneous to the city's Centennial planning. The two projects even shared a consortium of local designers known as the Dallas Housing Associates Architects under the lead of Walter C. Sharp.[7] Such synchronicity suggests a city that was busy crafting its urban environment. While the prospect of hosting the Centennial whetted the appetites of Dallasites since the early 1930s, the city's substandard housing stock likewise preoccupied the minds of local officials, civic leaders, and public health advocates. These dual efforts to "better" the city of Dallas stand in sharp contrast. As one pamphlet boasted, twenty-five million dollars helped to fund the construction of the Centennial fairground,[8] while 21.9% of the city's housing stock was deemed overcrowded, including six major "blighted" neighborhoods.[9] As newspapers reported, Federal Housing Administration funding went towards

[7] These architects, according to Cedar Springs' National Register nomination, were also referred to as the "Centennial Architects." In addition to Walter Sharp this group included: Lester Flint, Grayson Gill, Ralph Bryan, Anton Korn, Roscoe DeWitt, Everett Welch, Herbert Tatum, and Arthur Thomas. See: "Cedar Springs Place," #91001901, National Register Nomination, section 8, page 4.

[8] "Texas Centennial Exposition," original fair pamphlet (1936); Box 121; ARC ID 1160760; A1; Entry 5536; Records of International Conferences, Commissions, and Expositions, Record Group 43l; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

[9] *Blighted Area Survey of Dallas Texas*, March 15, 1935; Dallas County Relief Board; Folder H-7900; Public Housing Administration Project Files (1933-1939); Public Works Administration, Record Group 196; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

"beautifying property on Dallas Streets"[10] and traffic engineers worked to create "facilities adequate to handle the thousands of automobiles which will crowd the streets of the city during the Texas Centennial Exposition;"[11] meanwhile, in slum neighborhoods such as Little Mexico, just north of the downtown, nearly half of the immediate housing stock was considered "unfit for occupancy"[12] and almost 70% of units lacked a bath or indoor toilet.[13]

Like other public housing projects across the country, Cedar Springs was presented as a "slum eradication" project intended to provide a model housing colony. Notwithstanding such accolades at the time of its construction, the development has received limited academic study. This is despite the fact that Dallas' urban history has been the subject of numerous books and articles.[14] Robert Fairbanks, who has written extensively about the city and its housing, is the sole author to discuss the history and context of Cedar Springs, although his analysis does not consider the project's architectural implications. My work is deeply indebted to Fairbanks' study of housing and slum life in Dallas, as well as the particulars behind Cedar Springs' conception, a story I augment with additional primary evidence. Unlike Fairbanks, however, this research is drawn from the discipline of architectural history, and as such, the most

[10] "Fair Approaches to be Beautified; Federal Housing Fund Available," in *Centennial News* I, no. 18 (11 January 1936): 4.
[11] "Dallas Begins Traffic Study," in *Centennial News* I, no. 5 (5 October 1935): 4.
[12] "Percentages of Structures Unfit for Occupancy," *Blighted Area Survey of Dallas Texas*.
[13] "Percentages show Dwelling Units with No Bath or Indoor Toilet," *Blighted Area Survey of Dallas Texas*.
[14] These include: Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841-2001* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2006); Harvey Graff, The Dallas Myth (Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Robert Fairbanks, For the City as a Whole: Planning, Politics, and the Public Interest in Dallas, Texas, 1900-1965 (Columbus, OH.: Ohio State University Press, 1998).

extensive writing on the project remains its 1991 National Register Nomination.[15] Likewise, many scholars have written about the history and chronology of public housing in the United States in terms of both policy and design. Though the PWA housing initiative is often left out of the codified narrative of public housing in urban America,[16] several projects concurrent to Cedar Springs—including the Carl Mackley Houses (1933-1934) in Philadelphia—are often cited as landmarks in America's social housing movement.[17] Architectural historians have tended to focus on the city's civic architecture, including a recent book about the Art Deco Centennial fairground and the city's modern architectural canon.[18] Though Cedar Springs Place is recognized on the National Register, the academic lacuna surrounding this project neglects the critical insight that Cedar Springs Place provides about housing, development, space, race, and identity in 1930s Dallas. By examining Cedar Spring Place, I bridge these distinct conversations around city history, early public housing, and architectural design. The need to revisit the historical foundations of public housing in Dallas is especially imperative today, in light of that city's ongoing controversy regarding affordable housing. To address this, it is essential to move beyond a purely formal reading of Cedar Springs Place and to situate the project's conception, construction, and completion within the larger spatial and social framework of 1930s Dallas. All architecture can be one thing physically, yet "mean"

[15] National Register of Historic Places, "Cedar Springs Place," Dallas, Dallas County, Texas, National Register # 91001901.
[16] Consider the ubiquitous imagery of Pruitt-Igoe's demolition in 1972.
[17] See Dell Upton's *Architecture in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 238. See John F. Bauman's *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia*, 1920-1974 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987). See Gail Radford's "The Federal Government and Housing During the Great Depression," in *From Tenements to Taylor Homes* (State College: Penn State University Press, 2000).
[18] See David Bush and Jim Parsons, *Fair Park Deco: Art and Architecture of the Texas Centennial* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 2012) and Dallas Architecture Forum, *Dallas Modern* (Dallas: Visual Profile Books, 2015).

something else rhetorically and ideologically. It is critical then that we interrogate the realities surrounding this fledgling project, group housing that one newspaper described as offering Dallasites "a more abundant life."

While a formal analysis of Cedar Springs Place offers a meaningful interpretive method, this framework can be limiting; as architectural historian Cary Y. Liu observes, "'Architecture' is a broader phenomenon, comprising a set of material and immaterial connections, uniting aesthetic concepts, social relationships, traditions and beliefs, and standards of taste, exoticism, and decorum."[19] Or, to use Christopher Long's summation: "Buildings, like other works of art, always admit multiple readings."[20] As a housing development, planned as a large-scale neighborhood unit, Cedar Springs Place admits a broader reading beyond the buildings alone: as its title suggests, the project must be properly understood as greater than a compilation of homes, but rather as a "place" adjoining other spaces, individuals, communities, regulations, and visions for Dallas' urban fabric. By taking a landscape methodological perspective, this research helps us to understand how the discourse surrounding Cedar Springs Place vaulted across disparate spaces and communities with Dallas. As the confluence in the 1930s of the local housing crisis, the Centennial, and the construction of Cedar Springs Place—not to mention the local oil boom and the restructuring of city government—all suggest, we cannot think of the city as a series of isolated spaces and events but rather as a quilt of interrelated and simultaneous connections. To this end, maps and photographs are critical for

[19] Cary Y. Liu, "Encountering the Dilemma of Change in the Architectural and Urban History of Shanghai," in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 73, no. 1 (March 2014): 118.
[20] Christopher Long, "Architecture: The Built Object," in *History Beyond the Text: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources,* eds. Sarah Barber and Corinna Peniston-Bird (London: Routledge, 2009): 165.

understanding the spatial landscape of the city and Cedar Springs' situation within its larger environment. This landscape was not merely physical but ideological, and embraces how individuals, organizations, newspapers, and other groups *envisioned* the city and Cedar Springs' role. As such, letters, government documents, census data, photographs and—critically—newspaper articles are fundamental to understanding the spatial imagination of Dallas, including how Cedar Springs Place was positioned, placed, and framed through the written word.

This research nods to forerunners of the landscape method such as J. B. Jackson, Paul Groth, and Dell Upton. As Jackson wrote, architecture operates "not merely in terms of façade treatment: but in terms of plan and location, of the organization of space, of perspective and drama."[21] According to Chris Wilson and Paul Groth, this perspective shifts the agency of landscape from passive to active within a larger group of individuals and their collective. This approach necessarily draws on "landscapes of the mind," suggesting how images and the imagined environment are critical to both impressions and actions within the built world.[22] Cedar Springs Place, as newspaper commentary suggests, became implicated in the landscape of the Dallas mind, a physical token of more intangible ideas about city identity, growth, and opportunity. Dell Upton's notion of "landscape history" foregrounds this method, which accounts for intangible currents across the built environment like cultural landscapes. In his 1991 essay, "Architectural History or Landscape History," Upton proposes a cultural landscape model that synthesizes the tangible and imagined aspects of the built environment which inhabitants

[21] Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, "J. B. Jackson as a Critic of Modern Architecture," in *Everyday America: Cultural Landscape Studies after J. B. Jackson* (Berkeley, London, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003): 44.
[22] Chris Wilson and Paul Groth, ed., "Preface," in *Everyday America: Cultural Landscape Studies after J. B. Jackson* (Berkely, London, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003): 15.

use for both "constructing and construing it." By applying a landscape approach to architectural history, we can account for the inherent pluralities of a given space and may better examine the subjective, "complex," and "multisensory" "tangle" of the built environment. As with Upton's model, this research considers both "constructed and construed" environments, analyzing the built manifestation alongside its implications, meanings, and uses amongst multiple groups.[23] The progressive modernity of Cedar Springs' design and function takes on ambiguous meaning depending on *how* we frame the project.

Embedded within the larger landscape are considerations of style, influence, and rhetoric. This includes a formal reading of Cedar Springs Place and its environs in attempt to gauge how its architect(s) actively cited aesthetic antecedents including notions of "International Style" modernism and Art Deco classicism (likewise manifest in Dallas' nearby Fair Park). In analyzing the style of Cedar Springs Place, we draw from Ernst Gombrich's definition: "Style is any distinctive, and therefore recognizable, way in which an act is performed or an artifact made or ought to be performed and made."[24] A building's "style" is inherently expressive and, in the case of Cedar Springs Place, this expressive aspect was a pointed and rhetorical statement. Meyer Schapiro defined style as "a system of forms with a quality and a meaningful expression through which the

[23] Dell Upton, "Architectural History or Landscape History?," in *The Journal of Architectural Education* 44, no. 4 (Aug., 1991): 198.
[24] E. H. Gombrich, "Style," in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Donald Preziosi (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998): 129. Gombrich's essay was originally published in 1968.

personality of the artist and the broad outlook of a group are visible."[25] While the modernist aesthetic, as applied to lower income white residents, denoted notions of progressivism and liberal democracy, the style of Cedar Springs Place becomes a diversion from the larger social picture—that is, the active and exclusionary development of the city's image and edge. We may dissect the cultural product in many ways, and with each way extract new meanings. By threading together multiple methodologies, a clearer picture of Cedar Springs Place arises from this additive approach. In the research that follows, I will fuse an analysis of the formal implications of the project alongside the ideological landscape of newspapers and civic life; this is followed by an analysis of how those very same expressions come into conflict with how the project impacted (or, in some cases, failed to impact) the larger social and spatial landscape of Dallas itself.

[25] Meyer Schapiro, "Style," in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, Donald Preziosi, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998): 143. Schapiro's essay was originally published in 1953.

Chapter 2. Centennial Dallas

Dallas: The "Self Made" City

To understand Dallas in the 1930s is to understand a city in midst of major development. Michael Philips, reflecting on the city throughout the 20th century, called it a "post modern Potemkin Village," where Dallas' forward march of expansion and development seems to confound historical analysis.[26] In many ways the city's historiography represents the artful mythmaking around a city of constant progress, self-creation, and opportunity.[27] [28] Harvey J. Graff's *The Dallas Myth* (2008) offers an extended rumination upon just that, examining how Dallas was a vision both crafted yet complicated, singular yet divided.[29] To a great degree, historians and cultural commentators sourced this sense of self-invention from what Dallas *lacked*—a navigable waterway. In a 1949 *Fortune* Magazine article, Holland McCombs writes how, "Properly, it never should have become a city. Founded for no ascertainable reason, in 1841 on a flat piece of blackland soil that grew nothing much but cotton, Dallas was set astride no natural routes of trade." "Beneath the city," McCombs continues, "were none of the raw materials—the oil, gas, and sulfur—that made other Texas cities rich." And yet: "there Dallas stands—its skyscrapers soaring abruptly up from the blackland like Maxfield Parrish castles, and so wildly, improbably successful that the stranger leaves it feeling as if he had been suspended in a vast hyperbole."[30] The notion of individual agency defines the city that "is

[26] Philips, *White Metropolis*, 1.
[27] ibid., 5.
[28] See also: Patricia Evridge Hill, *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).
[29] Graff, *The Dallas Myth*, 47.
[30] Holland McCombs, "The Dydamic Men of Dallas," *Fortune* (February 1949): 99.

what it is" because "the men of Dallas damn well planned it that way."[31] To this A. C. Green, a prolific journalist and writer of Texan history and culture, adds, "Dallas, do not forget, was created, purely and simply… It sprang from people's minds."[32]

During the first half of the 20th century, this narrative of human agency fell into the hands of a powerful business elite, a group that procedurally and politically emphasized notions of "the city as a whole," to use Robert Fairbanks' phrase. The "big D" tended to think of progress in the city as a codified unit instead of constituent parts or problems.[33] As Kenneth B. Ragsdale observes, Dallas' leaders viewed the city's economic wellbeing as a joint responsibility.[34] Unsurprisingly, it was a model that tended to neglect the needs of minorities, a reality made all too clear in the decision-making process at Cedar Spring Place.[35] This trend is consummate with the larger landscape of southern progressivism during this time. 1930s-era social progressivism, while couched in a valid desire to support the disenfranchised, nonetheless sustained the stratified social hierarchies of Jim Crow America. This tension took on a unique character in many southern states. Eliot Tretter's research on housing segregation in the city of Austin provides us with an excellent framework for understanding this phenomenon. As Tretter has observed, "social systems could merely be reformed to facilitate more efficient and

[31] ibid., 101.
[32] Graff, *The Dallas Myth*, 33-34.
[33] Robert Fairbanks, *For the City as a Whole: Planning, Politics, and the Public Interest in Dallas, Texas, 1900-1965* (Columbus, OH.: Ohio State University Press, 1998): 147.
[34] Kenneth Baxter Ragsdale *The Year America Discovered Texas: Centennial '36* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1987): 83.
[35] This neglect likewise registers in the historiography of the city itself. Hill's *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City* represents one scholar's effort to study labor, radicals, progressives, and women in light of the traditional city booster narrative.

productive exchanges among social groups."[36] In the South, social progressivism was often coupled with business progressivism, which was largely concerned with implementing public programs to support urban and economic expansion.[37] Throughout the country, but particularly in southern states, reform was often clouded by the planning aspirations of white business leaders who reinforced a structure of "white supremacy and anti-black racism."[38] The 1936 Centennial event encapsulated this attitude, where whiteness became equated with capital and civic progress.[39] Progressivism in places such as Houston, Austin, and Dallas worked to solidify racial demarcation, whereby the political discourse associated non-whites with disease, immorality, and a threat to the existing social order. Civic improvements for blacks and Latinos were often "coincidental and selective," as Tretter observes, crafted to further reify racial boundaries.[40] The same trend was true in Dallas, where local leaders and the press focused on public housing not as means to improve individual lives, but rather as way to prevent ill-health, lawlessness, and to promote a general sense of civic steadiness.[41]

How can a city actively foster "a mythology of ceaseless progress?"[42] Attempts at city branding throughout the 1930s illustrate how Dallas touted its relative newness within the crucible of the "ancient" Republic of Texas. In the 1938 Worley's *City Directory* for

[36] Eliot M. Tretter, *Austin Restricted: Progressivism, Zoning, Private Racial Covenants, and the Making of a Segregated City* (Report to the Institute for Urban Policy and Research Analysis, 2011): 8-9.
[37] ibid., 9.
[38] Ibid., 10.
[39] Michael Philips, *White Metropolis*, 115.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Fairbanks, *For the City as a Whole*, 147.
[42] Philips, *White Metropolis*, 4.

Dallas, the city is described as "the Southwest's dominant city," which "only yesterday" was a "sprawling, booming railhead village."[43] This "young, growing, vigorous" Dallas was **"**the most important commercial and industrial city of the Gulf Southwest," and ranked as the "first in Texas and the Southwest in white population." In a catalogue of "Facts and Figures," the *Directory* goes on to describe the Dallas slogan as the "City of Opportunity."[44] The 1936 Centennial juxtaposes this notion of the "City of Opportunity" with the Empire of Texas. One pamphlet from the event describes "Dallas, boasting but few of the years of other Texas cities, presents the most progressiveness, the greatest return on the investment of Sam Houston, Colonel Fannin, Colonel Travis and other immortals who made possible the freedom enjoyed by Texas during these 100 years." Dallas is the youthful inheritor of the state's larger legacy, for "Dallas had only one log cabin on February 16, 1846, when President Anson Jones of the Republic of Texas lowered the Lone Star flag." "Since this statehood," the pamphlet states, "Dallas has gone forward." The document goes on to describe it as the city with "the most imposing skyline of any city in America" save "one exception—New York." Like the public housing under construction in the North, Dallas "[gives] to the world a clean city where buildings are unsmirched of coal dust and soot" and where "its citizens are looking forward and ever building a greater city."[45]

The buildings at the 1936 Centennial exemplify this urge towards innovation, which were selectively decorated with icons of a pre-Colonial past. Ostensibly, the fair

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[43] *Worley's Greater Dallas (Texas) City Directory*, vol. 1938 (Dallas: John F. Worley Directory Co., 1938). NB, no pagination

[44] Ibid.

[45] "Texas Centennial Exposition," original fair pamphlet (1936); Box 121; ARC ID 1160760; A1; Entry 5536; Records of International Conferences, Commissions, and Expositions, Record Group 43l; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

ground represents the flowering of Art Deco more than a decade after its introduction at Paris' 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs and several years after Chicago's Century of Progress (1933-34). The complex features a series of monumental, white, orthogonal exposition halls suggestive of simplified, classical forms (fig. 1). The buildings themselves, however, are accented with decorative murals and applied sculpture that is resonant of Spanish and Meso-American influences (fig. 2). One publication from the 1930s describes how "Architecturally, the buildings of the Exposition will derive inspiration from early American cultures. The mass of line, the dignity of composition that has marked the pueblos of the native American from Inca land to Aztec stronghold will be relieved with touches of those superimposed cultures from the Old World." Another pamphlet describes "The magnificent buildings, designed in Aztec and modern classic influence—with a majority of them air cooled." The most "pretentious" structures included Federal buildings (exhibits costing one million dollars), the $1,200,000 "Texas Hall of State," as well as the Agriculture, Livestock, Transportation, and Petroleum buildings.[46] In a *Centennial News* publication as early as 1935, an article describes the "Early Aztec Tone in Art" at the fairgrounds. The piece continues: "The influence of the early Aztec culture as well as of the Spanish mission period will be seen in the stone and mural decorations. Touches from other periods in Texas history, the colonial, the French and classic modern with be included also."[47]

The sights ranged from history to industry, from agriculture to the high-tech, including a lightshow "visible to flyers for 200 miles and to motorists for 50 miles." This

[46] *Texas: attend the Texas centennial celebrations, 1936* (Texas : s.n., 1936). Dolph Briscoe Center for American History. n. pag.
[47] "Early Aztec Tone in Art," in *Centennial News* I, no. 3 (21 Sept 1935): 4.

same book goes on to list various aspects of Texan life and sites, ranging from its "Missions" to its "Health Centers," from "Culture and Education" to "Industries." Again, the subsection on "Texas Cities" underscores notions of newness: "Texas is so enormous in size and so connected in the public's mind with the open range that people outside the state do not always realize it contains some of the nation's most important cities." "Texans are proud of their beautiful cities," the pamphlet continues, "their magnificent public buildings, imposing business structures and fine homes." Moreover, "there is an immaculate newness to most Texas cities that never fails to win admiration and comment from visitors. San Antonio is more than 200 years old, yet newness is delightfully blended with the old. Houston, Austin, and Dallas are approaching the century mark; though their great growth has been in recent years."[48] Dallas' city branding at this time, especially when viewed through the lens of the Centennial event, is telling. The city represented a place of "newness" that selectively called upon images from a pre-Colonial past, a frontier town that synthesized technological, social, and cultural innovation. As several authors have noted, Dallas' position within the southwest afforded the city a sense of historic and geographic ambiguity.[49]

Part and parcel of newness was a sense of potential and opportunity. As one *Dallas Morning News* article put it, "Dallas, with its snap and leadership—with its great aggressive press, is constantly attracting the best there is, both in professional and business lines. All of these things combined together makes of Dallas a city of real opportunity for most men and women." Adjacent to this article is a cartoon under the

[48] *Texas: attend the Texas centennial celebrations, 1936.* n. pag.
[49] See: Michael Philips' *White Metropolis* (2006); see William Neal Black's dissertation*, Empire Of Consensus: City Planning, Zoning, And Annexation In Dallas, 1900-1960* (Proquest Dissertation Publishing, 1982).

heading, "Dallas, the City of Opportunity" (fig. 3). The drawing shows an imagined future: a cavernous landscape of blocky skyscrapers against a dark sky, replete with an industrial expanse of smokestacks and factories in the foreground and a singular figure—his back turned to us—gazing out. Here is a vision of Dallas absent of its past, and it is telling how much that idealized representation of opportunity rested on a built landscape, sprawling upwards and outwards. Cedar Springs Place similarly suggests something about access to opportunity including—and critically—*who* got to partake in the booming city.[50]

PWA Housing: A "Fruitful Laboratory"

While the Centennial visualized Texan abundance, Dallas—like many other cities throughout the Depression—was the simultaneous recipient of massive federal funding; this, in spite of the fact that the "City of Opportunity" fared slightly better than other areas during the Depression because of its recent oil boom. New Deal groups such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Public Works Administration (PWA), the latter of which funded Cedar Springs Place, offered the city opportunities for job creation and infrastructure improvements.[51] The PWA was established in 1933 under the lead of Interior Secretary Harold Ickes and included a provision for a Housing Division, a semi-autonomous unit within the larger Administration. The Housing Division represented the first formal action by the U.S. government to create public housing, an effort that

[50] R. L. Thornton, "Dallas, Neither Port City Nor Fort, Built by Hardy Man Power," in *Dallas Morning News* (7 October 1934): v.
[51] For an extensive catalogue of WPA work in Dallas, see: Maxine Holmes, Dallas Public Library, and Gerald D. Saxon, Eds., *The WPA Dallas Guide and History* (Dallas Public Library, Texas Center for the Book, University of North Texas Press, 1992).

immediately preceded the creation of the United States Housing Authority in 1937. Authors often describe the PWA's housing division as an experimental aberration within the larger history of housing in America; for the duration of its four-year lifetime, the group faced constant opposition, but ultimately built fifty-eight developments, totaling 25,000 units.[52] Architectural historian Richard Pommer has called the PWA initiative some of the "finest urban housing in America," or what Gail Radford has described as a "fruitful laboratory for the development of a new kind of urban shelter."[53] Such acclamations are especially apparent in the manner by which the PWA thought of housing less in terms of singular houses and more in terms of the neighborhood unit. Two Housing Division staff members described the organization's attitude that housing "should not be regarded as an aggregation of houses but as complete neighborhoods, planned at one time and carried out to the mutual benefit of every neighborhood." These neighborhoods needed to have a sense of both seclusion and connectivity: "They should be isolated from and yet quickly available to transportation. They should be within easy and protected walking distance of schools and shops." The Housing Division sought to create fully designed residential neighborhoods, a total environment meant to foster a more engaged and dynamic communal life.[54] Thinking in terms of neighborhoods and residential districts would have profound implications on the siting of PWA projects: should public housing be built on vacant land, or should officials demolish extant slums and build in situ?

[52] Gail Radford, *Modern Housing for Americans* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996): 91.
[53] Ibid., 108.
[54] Radford, *Modern Housing for America,* 96.

Catherine Bauer, who helped to shape early US housing policy, was an advocate of the former model for ideological and aesthetic reasons. Bauer's seminal text *Modern Housing* (1934) hinges on the tension of how new housing should be placed within communities: that is, the difference between building on vacant land versus slum clearance. Bauer favored precedent examples from Europe, where modern architects worked on state-funded projects to create massive housing estates along the urban fringe.[55] Undeveloped land was both cheaper and offered a tabula rasa, free of extant infrastructure. For Bauer, building on unused land was an opportunity to articulate the vision that planners, architects, and housers wanted: "…if we are going through our own experiment in social democracy—or even if we are not—let us at least use it to make clearer to ourselves what we really do want."[56] Slum clearance, however, was the more "attractive practice," especially for local businessmen and politicians who were in such cases given the opportunity to rebuild dilapidated neighborhoods that endangered property values through public funding.[57] However, there was also an economic reality to large-scale housing projects. Acquiring slum land, often located towards the city center, was an expensive and complicated endeavor when dealing with multiple owners; sometimes, the federal government would seek recourse through eminent domain. While the government maintained this right since 1875, the 1935 United States vs. Certain Lands in the City of Louisville prohibited the usage of eminent domain for public housing purposes.[58] In the end, then, the matrix of legal and cost considerations caused many early PWA housing projects to favor Bauer's model of building on undeveloped

[55] D. Bradford Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: the Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010): 21.
[56] Radford, *Modern Housing for America*, 102.
[57] ibid., 104.
[58] Ibid., 102-103.

land. As Hunt observes, "Without the power to compel the numerous owners of a slum site to sell, the PWA had little choice but to turn to easy-to-obtain vacant sites."[59] This tension over where to build would have critical repercussions on the early public housing effort in Dallas, including Cedar Springs Place.

Removing the "Eyesore": Fighting Slums in Dallas

Though efforts at housing reform had existed for several decades in the United States,[60] the Depression spotlighted the problem of the urban slum. As with other cities, Dallas began to focus increasing amounts of attention on this particular public and civic health issue. The image of the slum held connotations not only of sickness and crime, but likewise represented a threat to real estate, development, and larger notions of civics and city functioning. Slums, as Fairbanks observed, seemed to lack the structured "culture patterns" of traditional community life; from this perspective, slum dwellers were "anomic, alienated, listless, rudderless people," predisposed to delinquency and the manipulations of radical politics.[61] In a 1931 report from a conference on housing, slums were deemed "a civic and social cancer that must be cut out by the surgeon's knife. After a certain stage in infects the body politic."[62] Within the image of the slum was a looming

[59] Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 23.
[60] Exemplified in the efforts of Jane Addams' Hull House and Jacob Riis' *How the Other Half Lives* (1890).
[61] Fairbanks, *The Public Housing Movement in the Southwest: Cities Battle the Slums before 1937*, 25.
[62] ibid.

fear for Dallas' affluent whites: a partnership between working-class whites, African Americans, and other marginalized communities.[63]

Local Texan newspapers, including the *Dallas Morning News*, recounted numerous stories about the tragedy of slums. A *Galveston Daily News* article from August 19th, 1936 encapsulates the prevailing attitude towards slum-dwellings:

> It has been demonstrated time and again that the kind of houses people live in go a long toward determining their general standard of living and their usefulness as members of society. The overwhelming majority of individuals who are morally, mentally and physically unfit come from squalid home surroundings.[64]

This short excerpt captures the sense of environmental determinism that undergirded conceptions of the slum, and which translated into larger notions of morality, civics, and citizenship. In an editorial entitled "Who Pays for the Slums" in the *El Paso Herald Post*, the newspaper tries to position slum-eradication as a community need "not built on sentiment but on horse sense:" "Private capital cannot finance really low-cost housing. In the interests of economy and city administration slums must go." The editorial states outright that: "federal, state and city governments must take the lead in providing decent homes for the present slum dwellers."[65]

The *Dallas Morning News* often featured stories about substandard housing within the city, including an editorial entitled "Against Slums:" "One of the hardest problems that Texas has to face is the problem of decent homes for its citizens… Every citizen should be aided by his Government to enjoy life and liberty and to pursue

[63] Philips, *White Metropolis*, 15.
[64] "National Housing Shortage," *Galveston Daily News* (19 August 1936): 4.
[65] "Who Pays for the Slums?" *El Paso Herald Post* (1 December 1936): 4.

happiness in a decent home environment."[66] One article actually linked slum eradication to the Centennial, reporting how "Local Slums, Shacks to be Cleared Away" in a city-wide program to "remove eyesores" as part of a "beautification program leading up to the Centennial celebrations proposed for 1936."[67] As these sources indicate, major Dallas slums included parts of West Dallas, located opposite the downtown along the Trinity River, Little Mexico, situated due north of the city center, and Deep Ellum, located in South Dallas adjacent to the Cotton Bowl Stadium.

Various municipal groups actively sought to survey the status of substandard housing in Dallas over the decade. The Department of Commerce conducted a real property inventory in 1934 that determined a total of 10,654 structures—housing 15,549 families—were "in need of major repairs." 1,718 of those were judged "unfit for use." More than 10,000 buildings lacked running water, nearly 19,000 were without "water closets," while 17,187 did not have cooking facilities at all.[68] In 1935 the Dallas County Relief Board published a "Blighted Area Survey of Dallas, Texas." This survey included maps of Dallas displaying metrics about the built environment including the percentage of overcrowded units to the percentage of units without a bath or indoor toilet. Tellingly, one of maps was marked with "Negro Sections" in the city, the only image that isolates a single racial population (fig. 4). The document goes on to relay other metrics, including tuberculosis deaths, Pellagra deaths, as well as juvenile delinquencies and illegitimate births. By linking the built environment to issues of public and "behavioral health," the

[66] "Against Slums," *Dallas Morning News* (3 May 1934): 6.
[67] "Local Slums, Shacks to be Cleared Away," *Dallas Morning News* (8 November 1934): 1.
[68] "Data Taken from Real Property Inventory, Dallas, Texas, Made in 1934;" The Department of Commerce; Folder H-7900; Box "Projects H-7900 + 7901 Dallas, Tx." Public Housing Administration Project Files, Record Group 196; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

Blighted Area Survey visualizes the larger civic fears associated with slum life. The same document featured an addendum of photographs from local slums; these images show densely-packed, timber-frame "shotgun" cottages, sometimes with local children posing for the photographer (fig. 5). Their captions are equally illuminating, and includes one text that reads: "This picture is not the result of a cyclone; it is just a typical dwelling in a section of South Dallas where many of our future Americans will be instilled with views of citizenship."[69] Again, the idea of equating one's built environment to one's capacity for citizenship comes to the fore.

[69] *Dallas Blighted Area Survey*, n. pag.

Chapter 3. Cedar Springs Place

"A Builder of Citizenship"

As the local media depicted it, Cedar Springs Place was crafted as the antidote to Dallas' slums; this progressive language in print parallels the formal program of the development itself. The $1,020,000 project, which was officially completed in September of 1937, features twenty-eight, fireproofed buildings positioned in a series of parallel rows running along a north-south axis, resulting in an intricate organizational interplay of orthogonal forms (fig. 6). The property, including the adjacent Maria Luna Park, comprises 22.3 acres.[70] Hawthorne Avenue and Lucas Drive frame its western and eastern boundaries, respectively, while Hartford Street runs along its northern perimeter. Maria Luna Park adjoins the southern edge of the property and was included in the original land purchase. Today, a Dallas Housing Authority (DHA) branch office occupies the park's original 1941 community center, a simple, white stucco building designed with the same formal vocabulary of the Cedar Springs residences.[71]

The housing units at Cedar Springs vary in height and length, though each occupies an elongated, rectangular footprint. Like earlier modernist housing experiments throughout Europe, Cedar Springs manipulates theme and variation: its architects take a shared formal vocabulary and "remix" these features throughout the project. This gesture allows for a visual harmony that does not become monotonous. The individual structures

[70] U.S. Public Works Administration, *Urban Housing; the Story of the PWA Housing Division, 1933-1936* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, 1936), 90.
[71] John H. Slate, *Historic Dallas Parks* (Charleston, Chicago, Portsmouth, and San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2010). The Park was originally named Maple Park, no doubt after the adjacent Maple Avenue.

at Cedar Springs Place are staggered along their shared axial lines, and pedestrian green space is threaded throughout. As one PWA publication boasted, "Less than one-tenth of the project is utilized for building space."[72] [73] This includes the central "Mall" corridor:[74] an uninterrupted lawn framed by walkways leading to the surrounding units (Fig. 7). Original photos from 1938 picture a series of freshly staked trees along the lawn's outer edge. This massive, communal green space is flat and open; its straight, orthogonal organization echoes Beaux Art planning systems. Of course, the name is resonant of Pierre Charles L'Enfant's National Mall in Washington D.C., the monumental corridor that links the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument, and the Capitol building in a straight axial alignment. This symmetrical hierarchy around a central "promenade" is also reminiscent of the Dallas Centennial Fair Park's "Esplanade." This inner arterial path at the fair park, which originates from the entrance gate and terminates with the monumental "Hall of State Building," features a 700-foot reflecting pool at its core. Like Cedar Springs, the Centennial complex faces inwards to this central area, and it is important to underscore how Dallas' first public housing projects mimics that same visual gesture as its grand fair park.

Cedar Springs Place shares a similar hierarchy of forms, with the humble, one-story units around the property's outer edge and the "set piece" buildings with balconies around the central core of the Mall. Topographically, the property follows a slow terrace

[72] Michael W. Straus & Talbott Wegg, *Housing Comes of Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), 203.
[73] A later publication, *Public Housing: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and Other Governmental Bodies Between the Years 1933 and 1939 with the Assistance of the Public Works Administration* (1939), modified that number to 15 percent. See page 661.
[74] In documents between the PWA and the Dallas Housing Committee, it appears that the "Mall" was a shorthand name used for the project's central green space. While the group considered naming this area "Chrestman Parkway," after judge N. M. Chrestman, it appears that the idea was scrapped in the end.

up from its outer edges towards an internal plateau. The entire plan is reflected around the Mall and includes a series of east-west pedestrian walkways that allow for perpendicular movement across the complex. The development can also be thought of as a series of quadrants, each surrounding a cul-de-sac parking corridor at the four corners of the property. Car traffic is relegated to those cul-de-sacs alone; otherwise, pedestrian walkways grid the entire complex and allow for building access to both the front and rear of individual structures. This uninterrupted superblock was so essential to the project's original plan that city officials agreed to close off Balfour and Fairmount Streets, both of which bisected the original property. In *Why Public Housing in Dallas*, a pamphlet produced by the Dallas Housing Authority in the late 1930s, there is an image of boys playing on the central lawn. The adjacent caption reads: "Plenty of room for play at Cedar Springs Place; out of the street, out of danger." Another photo from 1939 shows children seated in the Mall, watching a puppet show staged on a small, portable set (figs. 8A & 8B).

The arrangement of Cedar Springs' homes in relation to the entire development offers a critical commentary on how the urban neighborhood should operate. The building units face inward onto this shared green space—a communal "backyard". The area is expansive, and is further emphasized by its centrality. Instead of allocating each residence its own private backyard, architect Walter Sharp provides a common recreational area. Communal and pedestrian space was of course part of the larger modernist canon of social housing, from early Garden City models to the *Neues Bauen* estates of Germany. Other New Deal housing communities—such as Clarence Stein's

Hillside Homes and Hilyard Robinson's Langston Terrace—featured buildings around a central "commons" area, similar to Cedar Springs.

Sixteen of the property's buildings are single story structures. Eight feature two stories and a basement, while four are two stories without the added basement (figs. 9A, 9B, 9C). Together, these buildings hold 181 units containing 598 rooms in total. The development is comprised of two, three, four, and five-room row house units, three room apartment type units, and three and five room flat type units. The buildings are constructed of twelve-inch thick reinforced concrete blocks exterior walls and a stucco finish. The fenestration consists of steel casement windows and cast stone sills.[75] These structures are simple, white rectangular forms with flat concrete roofs and an orthogonal vocabulary of planar forms. Taken as a whole, Cedar Springs Place offers a composition of solid, horizontal surfaces in open space.

The single-story units are low-lying and elongated. The fenestration pattern combines tall, thin, single-pane and wider, 3 by 4 panel windows. The openings appear "punched out" from the stucco siding and feature a slightly protruding cast stone sill. The apartment entry sits atop a concrete platform that is approached by two short stairs from the sidewalk and is shaded under a simple stone overhang. There is a dark concrete banding where the building meets the ground, and the structure terminates at its top with a thin cast stone cornice.

In the two-story structures that feature basements, the lowest level is identified with a similar concrete banding that rises about four feet from the earth. The basement is further distinguished through a series of low, horizontal windows. These buildings each feature two front façade entranceways, containing a service stairwell. This circulation

[75] "Cedar Springs Place," National Register Nomination, section 7, page 2.

section of the building "steps forward," and a concrete overhang frames the outer doorway. The overhang is capped with a thin, vertical casement window that rises the entire height of the internal stairwell. The first and second stories feature the same fenestration pattern as the single-level buildings. When the larger windows are open, they create framing "wings" for the aperture, and results in a banded trim. A simple projected stucco stringcourse separates the middle and upper floors. On the backside of the building the articulated stairwell portion indents inward. In the basement was "Space for Mechanical Equipment," an incinerator room, a laundry room and work space, as well as three "drying rooms." The laundry rooms were equipped with drop down ironing boards and folding tables.

The two-story structures without basements, four in total, represent the architectural "crescendo" of the whole complex, and are sited at the heart of the property along the Mall. These each feature three frontal entryways; the entry "steps forward" along its first story, creating a single, blocky mass. The front doorway is set off center, and is framed by a series of applied cast stone quoins. This decorative trim is white like the rest of the building, but creates a pleasing pattern and movement through the shadowed indentations that separate the individual quoins. Another doorway with the same framing-trim is set along the side of this out-stepped unit. Both doors are approached by a series of stairs along a terraced platform. The same concrete overhang surmounts each door, followed by a cornice band and a balcony on top. A simple metal balustrade frames the balcony, which is accessed on the second story through a doorway that replicates the decorated entrance below. The front and back façade feature a pattern

of larger and smaller casement windows, and the upper story is offset with a simple stone stringcourse that runs the entire rectangular perimeter.

The interior units ranged from two to five rooms, the latter of which featured as many as three bedrooms (fig. 10). The humble, two-room units are more akin to studio spaces, with a living room intended to double as a sleeping area. Kitchens featured a refrigerator, tub, sink, worktable, and stove, all positioned in a row along a single wall. Some kitchens were large enough to fit a family table, which the architects represented on their plans. The architectural drawings in elevation indicate that shelving units were mounted above the kitchen appliances. Immediately adjacent to the kitchen, through a cased opening, was the living room, typically with at least one window onto the outside. For the buildings with second story balconies, one's living room opened up directly onto this area. A connecting hall linked the living room to the bathroom and bedrooms. The apartment units, despite their size, only featured one bathroom apiece, each with a single metal sash window and medicine cabinet equipped with a mirror. Walls were plastered, and the floor and bases were tiled. The bathrooms also held a bathtub, toilet, and double faucet sink. While the apartments were simple, their multiplicity of layouts were meant to offer flexibility to numerous family compositions. By delineating the function of each room, the architects sought to craft a stable and fixed set of spaces that would prevent the overcrowding associated with slum dwellings, a formal systematizing appropriate for the creation of "better citizens."

Several home goods advertisers "cashed in" on Cedar Springs Place, and the related ephemera help us to reconstruct the interiors of the units. The Sparta Ceramic Company in Manhattan posted an ad for their "Sparta Golden Pheasant Tile" which was

"Specified and Used by P.W.A. Architects," followed by a list that included Cedar Springs. The ad boasts how "Every bath room floor in the following Slum Clearance Projects is finished with Sparta Ceramic Tile." Locally owned Olive Myers Furniture-manufacturing Company advertised a photograph in the *Dallas Morning News* of an interior living room at Cedar Springs, "furnished by Olive & Myers" and "open for your inspection today." With the headline, "New Living Room Ensembles!," the company proclaimed itself "first for quality—and then price."[76]

A 1938 publication, *Housing Comes of Age*, provides a few more details on the complex including its "Social units and central laundries" "at the disposal of tenants." Moreover, "Each dwelling is equipped with an electric refrigerator and a gas cooking range," while the entire complex is "heated from a central plant."[77] The pamphlet, *Why Public Housing in Dallas*, depicts the image of a "bright and cheery" living room featuring three children at play. Another photograph shows boys seated indoors at a communal table; they are "making bird cages and other interesting things in the crafts room at Cedar Springs Place," which is "the right kind of activity for growing boys—keeps them out of mischief, keeps their mind occupied." It, in sum, "helps make citizens."[78] Current, clean, and well equipped—Cedar Springs place was designed and furnished for healthy, wholesome living.

Architect Walter Sharp's dated drawings for the "Heating Plant" indicate that this was planned as early as 1935, alongside the residential units (Fig. 12). The building was square in plan, with a 100-foot chimney-stack attached to its eastern end. The western, front elevation featured a double door beneath a wide window, and sandwiched between

[76] *Dallas Morning News* (19 September 1937), 6.
[77] Strauss & Wegg, *Housing Comes of Age*, 203.
[78] Housing Authority of the City of Dallas, *Why Public Housing in Dallas?* (Dallas, n.d.), n. pag.

two tall thin casement windows. The south and north elevations feature the same vertical windows, interspersed between an abstracted pilaster banding. It is significant that Cedar Springs was planned with amenities such as a heating plant, features that further underscore the PWA's intention to create self-sufficient neighborhood.

Cedar Springs' community center was not built until 1941, but architect Walter C. Sharp crafted a design for the building in 1935 (fig. 11). This building was to feature "stucco quoins" as a corner trim, which offered a visual resonance with the ornamentation of the dwellings. Internally the building was equipped with a "club room" and a "social room," the latter of which had a grand-looking fireplace trimmed with the same quoined banding. The community center also featured a kitchen, bathrooms, and a large storage space. The gesture of building a community center is critical; like the joint green space throughout the development, Cedar Springs Place was equipped with a facility meant for the specific goal of community building, citizenship, and group engagement. These were not meant to be isolated families living disconnected lives, but rather an active and interconnected neighborhood, a goal that was emphasized through and fostered by the architectural program itself.

Architect Walter Sharp employed an understated visual language for the project's various buildings. Yet even this formal simplicity has confounded attempts to denote the project's "style." The 1991 National Register Nomination lists the project as "International Style," citing its program as a "planned neighborhood development" and a general "austerity of… design" manifest in the use of open space, landscaping, and siting. The report goes on to qualify the project's "International Style" according to its "flat

planes including walls and flat roofs, asymmetrical composition and large bands of glass and little or no ornamentation."[79] The white boxiness of Cedar Springs Place certainly concords with the formal aspects of Hitchcock and Johnson's International Style, while the emphasis on community bespeaks a modernist interest in the social aspects of architecture.

Several publications from the 1930s, however, describe the buildings along vastly different stylistic tropes. In *Housing Comes of Age,* Strauss & Wegg caption an image of Cedar Springs with: "Home on the one-time range: Cedar Springs Place, Dallas, recalls the adobe architecture of the Southwest."[80] In another paragraph the authors include a list of regional variation in PWA public housing: "New York, Chicago, Camden, Cleveland, and some others are modern; Jacksonville and Miami are of tropical design; Charleston recalls the graciousness of its heritage; Boston is in keeping with the New England tradition; Dallas suggests the distinctive architecture of the Southwest."[81] This catalogue suggests that Strauss & Wegg viewed Cedar Springs Place in contradistinction to other "modern"-styled projects. The fact that the housing committee considered the name "Cedar Springs *Pueblo*" is telling, and resonates with the ambiguous pre-colonial design connotations of the 1936 Centennial.

The project's peculiar decorative feature, the applied quoin trim, is often pictured in publicity imagery of the complex, although it only appears on a handful of the buildings, including the community center. The quoining suggests several different stylistic paths: in Renaissance palazzos, in medieval masonry construction, in the Georgian brick homes of young America. The white planarity of the complex finds an

[79] "Cedar Springs Place," National Register Nomination, section 7, page 2.
[80] Strauss & Wegg, *Housing Comes of Age*, 68.
[81] ibid., 67.

even more immediate comparison in the fairgrounds located some seven miles south. Dallas' Centennial complex is an eruption of Art Deco forms, featuring an abstracted, boxy classicism accompanied by a stylistic nod to southwestern and Mesoamerican influencers. The buildings at Cedar Springs Place also find quick comparison with a lesser-known project by Charles Eames, the Dean House, completed in 1936 in Webster Groves, Missouri (Fig. 13). With its asymmetries, white coloration, simple geometries, and corner window treatment, the Dean House is undoubtedly "modern." Yet the painted brick building is replete with historicizing decorative touches, including applied corner quoins, almost exactly similar to Cedar Springs, as well as a stringcourse featuring classicizing dentils. Whatever the stylistic commentary within the project's architectural program, it is clear that Cedar Springs' design was aspirational. Like the Centennial, the buildings nod—albeit ambiguously—to Texas' fictive southwestern heritage, fused with the stylistic vocabulary of modernism. The planning program that underpins the complex likewise nods to some of the most current social housing programs in the modernist canon, a fact manifest in the project's emphasis on the socializing aspects of public space. The clean planes and sharp lines of Cedar Springs Place, as photographed by WPA photographers in 1938, are undeniable: these buildings make a pointed and ambitious aesthetic statement.

15,000 Visitors: Praise for Cedar Springs Place

Gushing newspaper accounts of the "PWA Housing Colony" set to provide a "More abundant life" buttressed the design and programing of Cedar Springs Place. Coverage spanned the project's conception to its completion. On December 9, 1937 the *Morning*

News reported the arrival of "Housing official" Dr. Paul Pearson, who was in Dallas "to Explain Lucas Undertaking."[82] The next day an article declared, "Work to Start on Big Housing Job Next Week" after being vetted by "Washington official and former Virgin Island Governor" who was "pleased at Prospects of Project."[83] Progress on the project seems to have stalled during much of 1936, interrupted no doubt by the planning and opening of the state Centennial, which officially launched at Dallas' State Fair Grounds on June 6th, 1936. A United States Housing Authority publication in August of 1936 included a short section about Cedar Springs Place, describing its "22.3 acres, part of which is devoted to a play park maintained by the city." The article goes on to describe the site even further: "Situated on well-drained, flat land, the site, although largely vacant, was chosen because there were no definite slum areas which were suitably located for a housing project." "The location," as the pamphlet continues, "is most centrally placed with regard to schools, parks, shopping, and employment centers. The area has been recently rezoned for residential purposes."[84]

Newspaper coverage of the project picked up around the summer of 1937, as the development approaches completion. A *Times Herald* piece from August 29th is titled "Pictures Reveal Details of Government's Model Housing Colony to be Opened Soon." The article goes on to describe the sheer "…magnitude and detailed planning of Cedar Springs Place…" including "…the installation of one of the three giant gas burning

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[82] "Housing Official Arrives to Inspect Project in Dallas," *Dallas Morning News* (9 December 1935), 1.
[83] "Work to Start on Big Housing Job Next Week," *Dallas Morning News* (10 December 1935), 1, 12.
[84] U.S. Public Works Administration, *Urban Housing: The Story of the P.W.A. Housing Division, 1933-1936,* Bulletin No. 2. (Washington, D.C.: Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, August 1936), 90.

furnaces that will give tenants heat from the central plant."[85] Several articles from that same month catalogue more specifics of the project, including its set rents ranging from "$20.04 to $31.50"[86] and how 685 families had already submitted applications to gain accommodations in the 181 units. "The increases in applications within the last month," one official added, "has been on the average of twenty per week."[87] Sometime in the fall of 1937 Jamie Stephenson, the development's property manager, is reported to have "…left Saturday for Oklahoma City to study methods being used at a similar project now nearing completing there." Stephenson is quoted describing the "extensive arrangements" for children at Cedar Springs, including "ample playground space being included in the landscaping plan for the twenty-two and one-half-acre tract on which the apartments are located."[88] It was at this time that the "First U.S. Tenant" was reported as signing a lease at Cedar Springs. "Nolan Trent, 21, audit clerk" became the property's first resident that fall, and was pictured with his toddler, Jon Denis, his wife, "Mrs. Trent" and their two and half month old, David Nolan.[89]

On the first move-in day, "Nothing but praise for their new dwellings could be heard from the first of the 181 tenants who are to eventually occupy the twenty-eight

[85] "Pictures Reveal Details of Government's Model Housing Colony to be Opened Soon," in *Times Herald* (29 August 1937), private collection.
[86] "U.S. Apartments will Rent from $20.04 to $31.50," Source Unknown (August? 1937), private collection.
[87] "685 Seek Flats in Housing Plant," in *Dallas Morning News* (22 August 1937), 13.
[88] "Low-Cost Housing Manager to Study Sooner Apartment," Source Unknown (Fall 1937?), private collection.
[89] "First U.S. Tenant Signs," Source Unknown (Fall 1937?), private collection.

apartment structures on the 23-acre tract," as one piece declared.[90] The article continues by narrating the "many new mechanical and structural comforts" within the development:

> Resuming life as they had left it in allegedly less liveable and sanitary quarters, the new tenants of Cedar Springs Place arranged their furnishings, gulped their first meals prepared in kitchens already equipped with mechanical refrigerators and gas ranges, drew water heated to 140 degrees at a central plant, slipped on inlaid composition floors, and made haste to try out their many new mechanical and structural comforts.[91]

"Dedicatory exercises" were held for the property on September 19th, 1937. Invited guests included "The Governor, city and county officials, and other notables," though the whole event was open to "public viewing and access."[92] By October 2nd, half the leases were signed.[93] Reporters gushed over the amenities and modern comforts at Cedar Springs: "The first families expressed delight over the steam heating plant, the basement laundries, the hot water storage tanks and relay plants in each of the larger structures, the clothes-drying rooms, the outdoors clothes-drying posts awaiting lines, the play places and the uniform garbage collection stands on the inner streets and drives."[94]

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[90] "Dallasites Occupy PWA Housing Colony to Seek More Abundant Life," Source Unknown (Fall 1937?), private collection.
[91] "Dallasites Occupy PWA Housing Colony to Seek More Abundant Life," Source Unknown (Fall 1937?), private collection.
[92] Document: Dallas Advisory Committee on Housing to Mr. Jim Dan Sullivan (City Park Board). Dated 15 September 1937. Folder: "95-023 [Addition] Park and Recreation Department General Subject Files. Maria Luna Park (Maple Park)." Dallas Municipal Archives.
[93] "Half of Leases Signed for Cedar Springs Place," in *Dallas Morning News* (2 October 1937), 13.
[94] "Dallasites Occupy PWA Housing Colony to Seek More Abundant Life," Source Unknown (Fall 1937?), private collection.

One *Dallas Morning News* article offers an architectural analysis of how "the old American custom of building houses to a plan for the outside and then placing rooms inside" has "been reversed" at Cedar Springs. Unwittingly, the article deploys the functionalist rhetoric of much modern architecture: "Here apartments have been designed according to best-known plans for utility and convenience and then walled and roofed." "In general," the article continues, "the houses when completed will bear some resemblance to so-called Spanish architecture, Mr. Haile said, but may be best described as utilitarian."[95] The *Brownsville Valley Sunday Star Monitor Herald* reported on October 17th, 1937 about how "Duke May Visit Federal Housing Project in Texas," a project that "may prove of interest to the Duke of Windsor if he carries out announced plans to make an inspection of government housing in America."[96] In that same month a "$23,000 landscaping job" was planned to begin. "The planting of big trees is slated to begin first," one official reported, "with smaller shrubs due to be set out later."[97] While it is unclear if the Duke actually did visit, it is notable how much prestige was heaped upon the project, through newspaper reporting, formal events, and official visits.

Sometime that fall, project housing manager J. L. Stephenson conducted a radio interview that promoted the project's benefit to Dallasites. The interviewer, "Sig Badt," begins with the larger picture of FDR's New Deal:

> Ladies and gentlemen, I have heard much of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's affection for the forgotten man and I have listened to many people ridicule the

[95] "Custom of Building Homes to Outside Plans Revered in Federal Housing Project," *Dallas Morning News* (11 October 1936): 8.
[96] "Duke May Visit Federal Housing Project in Texas," in *Brownsville Valley Sunday Star Monitor Herald* (17 October 1937), page unknown.
[97] "$23,000 Landscaping Job to Begin Tuesday for Low-Cost Housing," in *Dallas Morning News* (26 October 1937): 8.

> president's ideas for social welfare, but it has been by privilege to visit and inspect one of the most amazing government projects ever carried out in the south.

He goes on to rhapsodize, "Mr. Stevenson I have been completely amazed at the size and beauty and efficiency of these lovely homes the Government has built." Stephenson describes the benefits of the project, including how "Our apartments were built to provide good homes in keeping with the American standard of living—even for those in the low income groups." The manager goes on to praise the project's localism: "The Cedar Springs Place buildings were designed by local architects and engineers and built with local labor," he states. "Every bit of the material used, all of the furnishings and equipment were bought locally." Sig clarifies: "In other words, the government has not only provided good homes for 181 families who need good homes but you have given jobs to hundreds of men and distributed hundreds of thousands of dollars in local channels." Stephenson then proceeds to outline the project's amenities, stating, "When the decorating has been finished Cedar Springs Place will be one of the most beautiful apartment sites in Texas." The project offered safety, recreation, and greenery:

> Of course we have streets which do not allow traffic, children may play around their homes in complete safety. Our playground equipment will be installed within a few days and children will have a veritable park just outside their doors. Also, the property adjoining our tract has been condemned and within a short time we expect to have a beautiful one and one half acre park for everyone to enjoy.

As Sig begins to wrap up the interview he asks: **"**Now tell me, how many visitors have you had?" to which Stephenson proudly responds: "About 15,000 people have inspected the property."[98]

Newspaper coverage of Cedar Springs Place continued for months thereafter, including an article entitled "U.S. Housing project held Dallas Asset" describing the first-year anniversary ceremony held to commemorate the development. As "a builder of citizenship," Cedar Springs Place "should inspire local communities to build similar projects." The event included a musical program by the Federal symphony orchestra, a tour of the facility, and a prestigious guest list. "'This project has shown its worth,'" Congressman Hatton W. Sumners is quoted as saying, while Mayor George Sprague deemed it "a blessing to Dallas as well as to you." Chairman of the local Housing Authority Nathan Adams "classed the project as probably the best-built and best-managed unit the government has put up," while "Elmer Scott, executive secretary of the Dallas Civic Federation, appraised the project as a definite contribution to social progress."[99] As this media coverage attests, Cedar Springs had both a physical and written reality, in which the development's reformist agenda were subsumed into Dallas' larger imagination.

[98] J. L. Stephenson interview with Sig Badt (Fall 1937), private collection.
[99] "U.S. Housing Project Held Dallas Asset," Source Unknown (September 1938?), private collection.

Chapter 4: Opportunity Spatialized

Sight Unseen: The Story of H-7901-A

Cedar Springs' reception, and the general publicity surrounding the housing colony, belies the profound problems undergirding the project itself. For when we consider the larger demographic and spatial machinations around the development, this "builder of citizenship" suggests a more nuanced story of progressive growth in the "Big D." In this sense, actions not executed—absences—speak just as loud as the realized buildings at Cedar Springs Place.

As early as May 26th, 1935, the *Dallas Morning News* printed an article with the headline, "Slum-Clearance Move launched Here with U.S. Backing." The article chronicles a meeting to "go over suggested sites, gather data and report" by local housers under the lead of local Judge N. M. Chrestman. As the article reveals, the Dallas Housing Committee actually sought to build *two* public housing projects, "one for white, the other for Negroes," with each to "be compactly built on a single tract of ground." Already the article suggests a kind of socio-spatial mathematics, as the committee proposed "[eradicating] poor housing conditions of the lower classes here by luring the slum dwellers into the new, better type of homes, which would be no more expensive than the poorer quarters."[100] The committee was, in essence, proposing a type of demographic choreography, by "luring" the residents of slums out with the incentive of "better living quarters," but not eradicating the area to begin with. While it seems odd to call this method "slum clearance," it is resonant with other PWA housing efforts which, as

[100] "Slum Clearance Move Launched here with U.S. Backing," *Dallas Morning News* (26 May 1935): 1, 13.

previously mentioned, tended to favor building on vacant land as opposed to pre-existing slum sites. *The Dallas Express*, which held the moniker of "The South's Oldest and Largest Negro Newspaper," corroborated this claim with a June 1st front page headline, "Clear City of Slum Housing" with "Plans for Two Projects" for which "Negroes to be Given First Consideration."[101]

An application from the Dallas Advisory Committee on Housing to the Public Works Administration "for one housing project, for housing negroes, and for one housing project for housing whites" confirms this early reporting. Dated June 1st, 1935, the application proposes a site, "Lafayette Street," for the "First Project" intended for African American residents; this site is later enumerated as H-7901-A. The language suggests that the committee had given more thought and consideration to this "first project," for "There being approximately 40,000 negroes in Dallas, it is estimated by leading negroes who have studied the situation that from 200 to 300 family units could be occupied, and would be occupied, by negro families." Suggestions for this initial project are always *followed* by the second:

> Your committee recommends, and will make application for, a second housing project for equally as many units, or more, to be occupied by whites. The condition of housing as evidenced by the supporting exhibits we feel justifies such application, and this application will be followed at an early date by application for such a second and white project, with recommended site therefor.

This project, what would eventually be Cedar Springs Place, was denoted as H-7901-B. Just three days later, Judge Chrestman follows up his initial letter with another containing

[101] "Clear City of Slum Housing," in *The Dallas Express* (1 June 1935).

a "Negro Health Survey" featuring "a good deal of information concerning our negro population, their living conditions, health conditions and the like." It seems clear that at least initially the local Dallas housing committee sought to build *both* projects, but, as the *Dallas Express* article suggested, with added emphasis on H-7901-A, for African American residents.

After a flurry of letters between the Dallas Advisory Committee and PWA officials, A. R. Clas, Director of Housing, wrote a letter on June 21st, 1935 to Judge Chrestman after "reviewing the excellent submission material sent us by your Committee." Clas seems to address the double bind of Dallas' housing situation: at once a growing, Southwestern city "where vacancies are few," and yet a city seeking to improve destitute housing conditions. Clas' reasoning proceeds:

> In growing cities like Dallas…the construction of new buildings by the Government on vacant land may be justified on the basis of need. It may also be criticized by the real estate developer as an encroachment on his legitimate field. On the other hand, strict slum clearance, requiring as it does demolition before construction, may materially aggravate the building shortage. There is, however, a third alternative which is to build the new dwellings first on cleared land and then to follow up with a demolition program. This approach ties in well with the Dallas situation where many of the unit buildings are situated in areas unsuited for housing.

Clas was, in essence, proposing a multi-step approach for the city of Dallas: build the new units *first,* and then demolish the slums. By this time, the second project for white

residents, what would eventually become Cedar Springs Place, was approved to proceed in just that fashion:

> The Lucas Drive project can go ahead immediately without dislocating people, but we believe that when it is completed it would be in the civic interest to eliminate at least an equal number of unfit dwellings. This can be accomplished if the City will agree to exercise its police power and close up some of its 1292 unfit dwellings purely on the basis of health and safety.

Yet even this stipulation to *eventually* demolish slum units met resistance further down the line. A *Dallas Morning News* article suggests this tension as early as August 1935: "Though refusing to commit itself definitely upon condemnation of 200 of Dallas' worst houses, the City Council, Friday afternoon, passed a resolution authorizing the Park Board to purchase three or four acres in North Dallas to be used as a park in connection with the $1,000,000 Federal slum clearance project."[102] Rather than commit to slum clearance, as the PWA initially suggested, the Dallas city council was more than willing to buy a vacant land parcel adjacent to Cedar Springs in order to build a park. City Council still had not committed to condemning those 200 units by April 1936 as a memorandum from J. T. Haile, local PWA District Manager, states that "No action has been taken, but the condemnation of these units should be effected by the time the Housing Project is completed and ready for occupancy."[103]

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[102] "Council Orders Park Purchase for Slum Area," *Dallas Morning News* (3 August 1935): 1.
[103] J. T. Haile, "Memorandum," Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works (3 April 1936), Record Group 196 Public Works Administration, Public Housing Administration Project Files, Projects H-7900 + 7901 Dallas TX, Folder H-7900-703.

In Clas' original letter from June 21st, he goes on to discuss the other project for black residents, now called the "Ross Avenue Area," which "can accomplish our dual purpose of demolition and reconstruction with a minimum of hardships by asking the City to clear the proposed park area after the new housing has been supplied." Thus, the white project (H-7901-B), to be built upon vacant land, could proceed without delay under the condition that substandard slum units elsewhere in the city would eventually be demolished; the project for black residents, however, was to demolish and rebuild units within pre-existing African American neighborhoods. While the particular decision-making around H-7901-A becomes confused in the archival record, it is clear that it was unable to proceed with the same flexibility as Cedar Springs. The *Dallas Express* issued one final report on the matter in August 1935, its tenor cautious yet hopeful for the "Negro Slum Clearance Project Delayed." The short article states: "Although the Federal Gov. has approved the project of establishing a slum clearance unit for Negroes in Dallas, the project is temporarily delayed because of difficulties in selecting a suitable site for use. These difficulties are expected to be overcome shortly."[104] That was the newspaper's last word on the matter for the rest of the year.

According to author Robert Fairbanks, who has written on this controversy, housing officials "feared protest by whites if new residential areas for blacks were opened," therefore compelling decision-makers to pursue public housing for African Americans in established black neighborhoods. Fairbanks goes on to reconstruct the timeline behind this project and its ultimate failure; even with the support of local

[104] "Negro Slum Clearance Project Delayed," in the *Dallas Express*, 10 August 1935.

leaders, including Mayor George Sergeant, "the delay in finding an appropriate site doomed the city's PWA public housing project for African Americans."[105]

By September 27th, 1935 the *Dallas Morning News* announced the headline "$900,000 Housing Project O. K. 'D for North Dallas,"[106] and by October the Federal government had officially purchased the land parcel along Maple Avenue. That same month, however, A. Maceo Smith of the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce, wrote a letter to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt:

> We respectfully call your attention to the fact that we were among the originators of an application for two model housing units for Dallas, one for whites and one for Negroes. The project for whites has been approved and $900,000 set aside for this purpose. The Negro project has been denied. Mr. Clas wrote me October 10 that this was due to the fact that funds for his Department had been curtailed. In view of the fact that the needs for rehabilitation and slum clearance among Negroes is far more pronounced than among white people, and since the white project has been approved, it seems that some element of discrimination has been shown.

Smith proceeds to describe how "In a conference with Mayor Sergeant of this city, we are together in this prayer for additional funds." Smith attaches additional "options on sites" for future public housing, and exhorts the president, "In the interest of more employment, in the interest of correcting a grave need for such a project and in the interest of fair play

[105] Robert Fairbanks, The War on Slums in the Southwest, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014).
[106] "$900,000 Housing Project O.K.'d for North Dallas," *Dallas Morning News* (27 September 1935): 1, 16.

on behalf of a much neglected people, we urge your immediate consideration." To Smith, a leader of Dallas' black community, the federal government's failing was nothing short of discrimination. The *Dallas Morning News* also alighted on this negligence. In an editorial from August 1935 the paper states that, "urban progress might have been better served had" the housing project of black residents "come first, for there is a wider spread of inadequate housing and sanitation for the black than the white population." Still, the *Dallas Morning News* framed the problem of slums as a discredit to the larger city image. The editorial bemoans the neighborhood of Deep Ellum, a black community close to the Centennial fairground, as "a blackeye in the appearance of Dallas for next year's visitors" while little Mexico stands "as a disgrace to Dallas."[107]

A. R. Clas, the Director of Housing at the PWA, later responds to Smith: "For your information, this project, providing both slum clearance and low rent housing for Negroes, had received approval and was scheduled for construction on July 15, at which time an adverse decision of the sixth circuit court of appeals made its abandonment necessary. A search for suitable vacant area for a Negro project was immediately instituted and negotiations were under way on several sites." Moreover, "Although options were not complete, a request was made for an allotment for a project for Negroes in Dallas. This request was not granted as our program was curtailed, but I wish to assure you that if and when further funds are made available, such a project will be reconsidered." While the specific decision-making around H-7901-A is difficult to reconstruct in full, it is clear that the spatial mathematics of building a white development was easier to compute than siting a black development. As Fairbanks observes, the

[107] "Slum Project," *Dallas Morning News* (11 August 1935): 12.

prevailing color lines of a segregated Dallas meant building black housing within a black community; white housing, in contrast, offered more freedom of movement within the developing city.

Life at the Edge: Landscapes of Growth

For a city in the midst of immense growth, as Clas suggests in his letter to the Dallas Housing Committee, access to this spatial expansion was constrained to a carefully choreographed white development. This painful paradox asks us to reassess Dallas' self-branding as a "City of Opportunity," and to question how that access to opportunity was disbursed, and to whom. For Cedar Springs' placement along the city's burgeoning edge offers us a visual and spatial representation of how the city was in the midst of large-scale urban growth. This is especially apparent when examining maps of the city throughout the teens, '20s, and '30s. For the early decades of the 20th century, Cedar Springs was not part of the city proper; in fact, the Lucas family originally owned the land, a Dallas pioneer family who maintained the property from the initial settling of the city in 1848 and eventually sold the parcel to the federal government in the 1930s. This fact alone indicates the juncture at which Dallas sat in the 1930s: shifting from an agrarian past and into an urbanistic future. On a 1905 Worley map of Dallas, Cedar Springs lies so firmly outside of city limits that it is beyond the scale and scope of the image; the same is true for the 1918 Worley edition.

The first map to actually depict what became the Cedar Springs property is the 1927 Sanborn Fire Insurance map of Dallas. As the key indicates, the northwestern edge

of the city was still sparsely populated, with the exception of two stray plots of land located above a section of the map identified as "proposed" (Fig. 14A). One of these comprises the future site of Cedar Springs Place, and the vacant property parcel is depicted in its entirety. Surrounding the property is a sparsely populated neighborhood, with the exception of residences along Maple Avenue. The land that will eventually become Cedar Springs is shown as completely empty (Figure 14B). Maple Avenue features scattered, mostly single story, wood frame structures. Many are marked with an "x" for shingle roofing, though a few are labeled with a solid black dot, indicating a "composition" roof. The majority of these are identified with a "D," for "Dwelling," and many have a small, detached single-story structure labeled "A" for "auto house or private garage." The corner of Maple Avenue and Woodrow Street appears to have been a small commercial intersection, with a grouping of buildings labeled "S" for "store." A half-block up Maple is an auto repair and filling station, adjacent to a chicken hatchery. Behind these is a building labeled "Chair Factory – Ford Eng." Yet another filling station and auto repair, separate structures across the street from each other, are situated at the far end of Maple, at the intersection with Clara Street. The "Dallas-Denton Electric Railway Right of Way" appears to have passed through the property, but the city would later vote to cut-off this thoroughfare and incorporate it into the larger Cedar Springs block. The blocks located due northwest of the property have a handful of single-story, timber framed dwellings. The only identifiable institutional presence on this block is the Mary King Memorial Church, facing onto Kings Road.

An aerial image of the Old Parkland Hospital captures the neighborhood sometime in the 1930s, including the empty land parcel where Cedar Springs is

eventually built (fig. 15). Just as the Sanborn Map indicated, buildings clump along the Maple Avenue artery. To the Southeast of the image, due south of the railroad line, is dense development. The landscape is sparsely populated to the north of the property, further underscoring the fringe quality of the neighborhood. The sheer *lack* of representative imagery from this area is telling; life along the city edge is without a strong historical register. The clearest picture we have of the pre-existing housing stock in the neighborhood is an image from the *Dallas Morning News* under the subheading: "Buildings to be Swept Away for Housing Project Park." Located on the land that would later become Maria Luna Park, these four, simple, timber frame structures, each set back on a lawn, offer some suggestion of the surrounding building stock (fig. 16).

The 1934 Blighted Area Survey, which consists of a series of maps of Dallas labeled with various metrics of "blight," also underscores the edge quality of the Cedar Springs property (refer to fig. 4). Conveniently, H-7901-B is labeled in red across all of these images. Throughout many of the visuals, the Cedar Springs property is so far beyond the confines and activity of the city that it is not even labeled with the given metrics. This includes a zoning map, which leave the property and its environs unmarked; the same is true for the images depicting "Percentages of Structures Unfit for Occupancy" and "Houses Unfit for Occupancy." On another map, "31-40%" of units are labeled as overcrowded, however, other images indicate that the area had no pellagra deaths, no juvenile delinquencies, no illegitimate births, and only a handful of Dallas County Relief and United Charities cases.

In comparison, the original area proposed for H-7901-A for African Americans was located in a preexisting black community, and as Robert Fairbanks notes, would have been sited along Ross Avenue in the dense Hall Street-Thomas neighborhood just north of the city's downtown. An aerial image of the Hall Street-Thomas neighborhood, dated to sometime during the 1930s, is revelatory. Compared to the aerial imagery of Cedar Springs' environment, this area is densely packed; the map is even labeled with "African American Business – shopping area" district (fig. 17). Philips describes State-Thomas as "the vital cultural and intellectual center of African American life in Dallas," a neighborhood that amalgamated Victorian bungalows and shotgun housing.[108] The 1921 Sanborn map corroborates this: the neighborhood is heavily built up, including larger dwellings facing main thoroughfares and shotgun housing along subsidiary alleys. The institutional picture of State-Thomas consisted of numerous African American establishments: the Juliette M. E. Church, a "Colored High School" (unnamed), the Gaililee Missionary Baptist Church, the Mt. Moriah Baptist Church, the Hall Street Park and Bathing House, and a "dance pavilion," to name a few (Figure 18A). All of these are labeled as "colored." The area is mostly residential, except for the North Central railroad line, along which are manufacturing and industrial businesses: the Dal-Tex Coffee Co., the Barrett Company of Texas roofing warehouse, the Southern Architectural Cement stone company, wood yards, and an "Arctic Ice House." This profile for the Hall Street-Thomas neighborhood holds steady even into the 1950s, as a quick comparison between the 1921 and the 1951 Sanborn Map from the neighborhood suggests (Figure 18B). The area remains a densely-packed residential area, this time with the introduction of apartment buildings scattered throughout various blocks. The streets are even further

[108] Philips, *White Metropolis*, 170.

subdivided into alleys and "courts," often with dwellings facing inwards to this area. The institutional presence of "colored" churches remains the same, and includes a YMCA and the Booker T. Washington High School, which was moved a couple of blocks to a new location and building, as well the Darrall Elementary School. Thus, while Catherine Bauer's idealistic notion of building social housing on a tabula rasa is appealing, the concept becomes politically and racially loaded in the case of Cedar Springs Place. Flexibility, openness, building-anew: these are easily afforded to white residents, while black residents are spatially-tethered to a racial mapping of the city.

Cedar Springs as Social Siphon

The controversy surrounding Cedar Springs Places did not involve its conception alone. Complaints also swirled around the tenants selected to live in the new housing colony, or what one PWA official called a "social siphon" that favored not Dallas' neediest whites, but rather a group of "deserving poor."[109] As Fairbanks suggests, by cherry-picking residents, housing officials had a means to ensure the project's perceived success.

Local residents and organizations seemed to have been worried about the quality of incoming tenants, as a letter from Ashley H. Doty, a local Associate Manager Supervisor for the PWA reveals. Writing on September 10, 1937, Doty describes a meeting of the Oak Lawn Community Council where "residents [were] somewhat apprehensive as to the type of tenant we will have" and asked PWA officials to "[give] a very clear picture of our plans of tenant selection."[110] Part of this tenant selection process

[109] Fairbanks, *For the City as a Whole*, 155.
[110] Ashley H. Doty to H. A. Gray, 10 September 1937. National Archives. RG 196: Public Housing Administration. Project Files (1933-37). Box No. 380. File Folder: H-7901.09.

necessitated that residents held a minimum income, credit credentials, and other references; that such tenants, including a "365-pound policeman," as one paper declared, might be able to afford market-rate rents angered the local real estate community.[111] In his 1937 radio interview, project manager J. L. Stephenson described the selection of residents: "The government will rent only to families who cannot get decent homes at a price they can afford and are now living in bad or crowded housing. The tenant's income must be sufficient to pay the rent required by the income cannot be more than five times the amount of the rent." Yet tenant selection involved not only this matrix of economic needs, but also the moral rectitude of the families. Stephenson continues: "If a family is too deeply immersed in debt, if they have good living conditions where they are, if they are not people of good character and principles, the applications are refused. I can tell you in all sincerity that we have the most home loving, intelligent, well behaved tenants in the country." Stephenson repeated this sentiment in a news article, and is quoted as welcoming "only families of a good moral character."[112]

But who were these residents? Can we understand their work, lifestyle, and family structures better? According to the 1940 Census, most families represented nuclear units with a single income from the male head of household. Of the 177 families listed, thirteen of them consisted of female-headed households. Most families ranged from two to five persons, although a handful exceeded that number including the eight-person Sahwab family that, curiously enough, included a "maid." The Holmes family also had a maid, Lorene Carlisle, the Rhoades family had a "lodger," and the Hewston family included a "nurse." Occupations ranged from salesmen to clerks, from maintenance men to bellboys;

[111] Fairbanks, *For the City as a Whole*, 155.
[112] "Low-Cost Housing Manager to Study Sooner Apartment," Source Unknown (Fall 1937?), Stephenson Family File.

E. S. Burkley, an assistant WPA engineer, lived at Cedar Springs, as did Lerry R. Rawland, a minister.[113]

According to the United States Census Bureau, the 1940 census revealed a median annual income for men at $956.[114] Of the 177 household incomes listed at Cedar Springs Place, sixty-six residents (which included two women), had a yearly income of $1000 or more; that is, roughly 37% of families exceeded the national median income that same year. Leo Morgan, for example, made $1,700 in 1939 through his work as an "Inspector." Robert P. McGrew, a life insurance salesman, made $1,500. Forty residents made between $800 and $999 that year, accounting for 22% of the development's households. All the remaining incomes were less than $800 for the year, which included individuals who did not work for the full 51 weeks, had some other source of income, or were listed with discrepancies on the census sheet. These numbers are far from representing a technical statistical survey, but as an overview, they are revealing. Our immediate connotations of "slum dwellers" are Dallas' most destitute, lacking or limited in financial stability. These residents, however, do not fit that model; most households show steady incomes, while roughly half of the residents approximate the national median income or exceeded it altogether.[115]

As early as September 22, 1937, PWA officials received a letter of complaint from a concerned citizen, Vera Kennedy, who described "being disappointed in some of

[113] This information is compiled from the 1940 Census, as digitized by Ancestry.com.
[114] United States Census Bureau, "1940 Census Records Release," Profile America: Facts for Features (22 February 2012), web, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb12-ffse01.html>.
[115] This census survey is by no means exhaustive, and would be strengthened if specific data existed for the median income profile of Dallas alone in 1939/1940. My point is to show a more nuanced perspective on the profile of early public housing residents at Cedar Springs Place.

the things that I found" after "inspecting some of the apartments" at Cedar Springs. Kennedy writes how "the section in which this project is located is a very undesirable part of Dallas" where "the class of people who live in that section, are not the people who are eligible for the apartments." That is, "it seems that the tenants who were occupying the apartments, seemed to be of a better class than those living in that section," and yet "it was my understanding that the apartments were to be for the very poor people." Kennedy goes on to criticize the lack of clothes closets, cabinets, and garages for cars, concluding with: "I am a tax payer and I certainly hate to see good money used in such a manner."[116] Kennedy's commentary suggests a larger perception that the "class" of Cedar Springs' residents did not match the intended profile for low-income housing.

In May of 1938, after the project had been active for over six months, housers received a letter of support from an early tenant at Cedar Springs Place, Mrs. S. M. Hart. Though Hart's letter is personal and positive, it provides further insights into the controversy surrounding the project's tenants. She begins, "I understand that there has been quite some discussion both pro and con as to the living conditions of the Cedar Springs Project, and as one of the very first tenants I would like to have my say." She continues:

> I understand that there has been criticism on the class of people who were chosen for tenants. It seems some people think it is populated with people who are almost on charity so are not desirable neighbors, while others complain the people there are making good salaries, were living in good quarters and are able to pay more rent so should do so and leave the project to people making less.

[116] Vera Kennedy to National Low Cost Housing Administration. 22 September 1937. National Archives. RG 196: Public Housing Administration. Project Files (1933-37). Box No. 380. File Folder: H-7901.09.

Hart then recounts her own experience: "Here I wish to say I have found the happy medium. True, most of us did not come from buildings caving in on our heads and infested with rodents, etc., or if any did, it certainly was not to their liking." "But on the other hand," she continues, "I know no one was allowed to move from a perfectly normal, comfortable place to come in here and save the difference for luxuries or such." She goes on to praise the "recreational facilities," the "Social Unit," the "P-T-A," and other activities at length. "In conclusion," Hart writes, "let me say we owe more than a little to our very able manager, Mr. Stephenson, who has co-operated with us one hundred percent and has done everything humanly possible to make this the MODEL project that it is and give us just a place to live but happy homes for us and our children."[117] Though Hart's letter is laudatory in nature, it nonetheless suggests a larger impression that Cedar Springs represented a "social siphon" for the deserving poor.

[117] Mrs. S. M. Hart, "Open Letter," 19 May 1938. National Archives. RG 196: Public Housing Administration. Project Files (1933-37). Box No. 380. File Folder: H-7901.09.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

After the Fact: Public Housing in Post-War Dallas

The history of public housing in Dallas—and in America—shifted greatly after early PWA housing experiments. Throughout the country, local public housing authorities emerged in the wake of the 1937 Wagner-Steagall Act, shifting responsibility from the federal to the local level. In Texas, this included the San Antonio Housing Authority (1937), the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (1937), the Houston Housing Authority (1938), and the Housing Authority of the City of Fort Worth (1938), among others. In 1939, Cedar Spring was absorbed into the Dallas Housing Authority that, for the next decade, embarked upon a highly ambitious building program.

Five years after the completion of Cedar Springs Place, the city finally erected its first housing units for African American residents. Frazier Courts (1942) was built to accommodate 250 households while Roseland Homes supported 650. That same year the DHA built 102 units for Mexican Americans called Little Mexico Village. In many ways, the apparent success of Cedar Springs Place—which to a great degree is embedded in the visual "cleanliness" and "whiteness" of the project—was used to justify these projects. In the publication, *Why Public Housing for Dallas*, the DHA deployed imagery and anecdotes from Cedar Springs Place for just that purpose. This involved the literal juxtaposition of slum imagery with that of Cedar Springs, including captions that describe the latter as a "Scene in Better Life and Living," a place where "This Little Girl Plays in Safety," and which "keeps [growing boys] out of mischief."[118] While Cedar Springs is placed in visual and rhetorical contradistinction to the "menace" of slums, the

[118] Housing Authority of the City of Dallas, *Why Public Housing in Dallas?*. Dallas, n.d.

project never formally replaced slum dwellings, as was originally planned. For Dallas' City Council failed to complete this part of the program, where Cedar Springs was initially predicated upon the *eventual* demolition of slum housing elsewhere in the city; as a 1938 article confirms, "this phase of the work was never carried out," a gesture which further stresses the disconnect between Cedar Springs' denotation as "slum clearance" and how the development functioned in practice.[119]

In 1943, however, Cedar Springs received an additional 220 units for white residents, while Washington Place (and its addition) offered 347 units for white Dallasites. After the war, 2,622 units were eventually built for African American residents, 500 for Mexican Americans, and 1,500 for whites. Between 1942 and 1954, the Dallas Housing Authority built over 6,000 public housing units for local residents.[120] Despite these numbers, the affordable housing shortage for black Dallasites was acute during this time. A. Maceo Smith, who in 1935 accused the PWA of discrimination for not building H-7901-A, reflected in 1948 that, "It is harder to find homes for Negroes in Dallas than in any other city in the South."[121] The city's wartime population surge only exacerbated this problem; between 1940 and 1950 Dallas' black population swelled by 30,000, but private construction only built 1,000 new units available to African Americans. According to a 1950 "Report on Negro Housing Market Data," 21,568 black families were reported as living in 14,850 units.[122] It is important to note how Cedar Springs presaged an ongoing narrative in which blacks struggled to access housing within a city that was nonetheless growing at an exponential rate.

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[119] "Blight Areas Here Cited for Slum Clearance," in *Dallas Morning News* (14 February 1938): 3.
[120] Fairbanks, *The War on Slums*, 176-176.
[121] Fairbanks, "From Consensus to Controversy," 39.
[122] Philips, *White Metropolis*, 124.

The City of Opportunity, Reconsidered

The controversy surrounding Cedar Springs Place—the disconnect between the built object and its larger socio-spatial geography—asks us to reconsider Dallas' slogan as the "City of Opportunity." While Henri Lefebvre's notion of the "right to the city" has become a fashionable and multivalent phrase, David Harvey's analysis is apropos. Harvey defined the "right to the city" as "a right to change ourselves by changing the city;" that is, "The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights."[123] Though Harvey's commentary is not even a decade old, Cedar Springs Place—paradoxically—suggests this very same problem, where access to the "City of Opportunity" was selective, curated, and piecemeal. As such, Cedar Springs' quality of "firstness" runs the risk of obfuscating our understanding of how the project worked *in practice*. The label of being "first" can take on ambiguous meaning. When it comes to the progressive proposal for public housing, being the first can imply a sense of experimentation, reform, and innovation; but it also can suggest trial and error, assessment, and failing.

In studying the built environment, it is important to differentiate between ideology and practice, for both offer indications of identity and, in our case study, Dallas' character. To borrow from sociologist Harel Shapira, "Thinking about identity through the lens of practices is insightful because it allows us to see identity not simply as a passive state but as an active one, connected to the various things people do and seek to do to affirm who they are and want to be."[124] As Cedar Springs suggests, the ideological identity of Dallas—that "City of Opportunity"—was often in opposition to the city in

[123] David Harvey, "The Right to the City," in the *New Left Review* 53 (September-October 2008): 23.
[124] Harel Shapira, *Waiting for Jose* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013): 156.

practice. The physical, architectural object of the housing development makes this contrast clear, where the ideological underpinning of Cedar Springs does not match its development and larger role within the city itself.

Cedar Springs speaks to the contested part public housing plays within a given built landscape. As a property for white residents, the project was afforded spatial opportunity and access in a way that was frowned upon for a comparable black low-income housing project. Whether it is the old adage of history repeating itself, or the mere intransigence of color lines in American cities, the Texas Department of Housing was recently faulted for perpetuating these same segregated housing policies. In a 2015 United States Supreme Court ruling, Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs v. The Inclusive Communities Project, Inc., the court maintained that Texas housing officials granted low-income housing credits in a manner that reified historical segregation lines, focusing affordable units in poorer, African American neighborhoods. The Court voted in a 5-4 decision to uphold the notion of "disparate impact," a "legal theory that says individuals can allege housing discrimination under the federal Fair Housing Act without having to prove that someone intentionally sought to discriminate." Though a federal district court judge later dismissed the case, the Supreme Court ruling has left fair housing advocates energized. Texas has begun to make improvements in the wake of this decision, including Dallas' own efforts to distribute affordable housing throughout the entire fabric of the city.[125] In March of 2016 the city invited the Urban Land Institute (ULI) to make recommendations for "Affordable Housing and Mixed Income Strategies;"

[125] Rachel M. Cohen, "What Texas Ruling Means for Fair Housing," in *Next City* (9 September 2016), web, <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/fair-housing-ruling-dallas-texas-discrimination>.

ULI's suggestions included "[Mustering] the political will to address the affordable housing crisis," creating a CEO of Housing and Community Investment, establishing a transparent housing policy, and expanding housing options in "high opportunity areas."[126] Though this planning process is ongoing in Dallas, it is significant how the history of the city's first public housing project still resonates today. This intersection between the spatial landscape, the architectural object, and, in the case of Cedar Springs, efforts unrealized, offers a lesson for architectural historians as well. By moving beyond the formal reality of architecture alone, buildings become implicated in larger dynamics of space, place, people—and even absences, as the failed housing for African American residents in Dallas suggests.

Today Cedar Springs Place has been absorbed into the megalopolis of 21st century Dallas, which properly understood encompasses not merely the city's jurisdictional limits but the suburban and exurban communities beyond: Plano, Garland, and Arlington, to name a few. Cedar Springs looks relatively unchanged, though the perimeter units along Lucas and King Streets have been converted from single to double-story structures, and the prominent smokestack of the original heating plant has disappeared. The window mullions have been painted black, and the exterior paneling on the structures often disrupts the smooth planarity of the project's original skin. Now home to 402 units, the project was added to the National Register in 1991 and was "modernized," according to the Dallas Housing Authority, in 1995. Today the project is no longer segregated, and according to 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) data the surrounding

[126] Urban Land Institute, "Dallas, Texas: Affordable Housing and Mixed-Income Strategies," (February 28-March 4, 2016), web, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/302217653/ULI-Advisory-Services-Panel-Dallas-2016-Presentation>.

neighborhood is 46.46% white, 20.973% black, 0.22% American Indian, 8.894% Asian, 5.752% two or more races, and 17.699% "some other race alone," which is often an option that Hispanic respondents select on census returns;[127] 44.58% percent of the neighborhood explicitly identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino.[128]

The census tract within which Cedar Springs sits is an outlier in terms of income profile. As ACS data indicates, the median household income in 2015 was $28,750, compared to $92,744 in a tract immediately adjacent to it.[129] Other apartment complexes surround Cedar Springs, including the Villa Torino Homes and the Oak Lawn Heights apartments. Maple Avenue has retained its commercial character, and includes "vaping" stores, Eagle Liquor, Maple Mattress Furniture, several auto shops, and numerous eateries: El Mezquite Bar, Taqueria Boca Del Rio, Oishii Suishi, and Dickey's Barbeque Pit, to name a few. The Greater Dallas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce sits on the same property of Cedar Springs, while the adjacent park, renamed after local businesswoman Maria Luna, features a baseball diamond and a playground. Immediately north of the Cedar Springs census tract is a Starbucks and a neighborhood of single-family homes; on the other side of the Dallas North Tollway is a Whole Foods. The larger neighborhood, Oak Lawn, is now considered the epicenter of the Dallas/Fort Worth LGBT community.

Like Centennial Dallas, the contemporary city has grown, demolished, and rebuilt itself in a patchwork fashion. All the while, Texas' first public housing development has

[127] Total population maps based on "White Alone," "Black or African American Alone," "Asian Alone," "Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander Alone," "Some Other Race Alone," and "Two or More Races." Social Explorer (based on 2015 ACS data; accessed 10 April 2017).
[128] "Total Population, Hispanic or Latino." Social Explorer (based on 2015 ACS data; accessed 10 April 2017).
[129] "Median Household Income (in 2015 Inflation Adjusted Dollars)." Social Explorer (based on 2015 ACS data; accessed 10 April 2017).

lived out its quiet existence as a residential community, the integrity of its exterior architectural guise intact. The narratives of its contentious creation—democracy, opportunity, potentiality, and failure—might not be immediately apparent in the buildings today, but the project stands as a crucible of those themes that still shape and define the contemporary city.

Illustrations

Figure 1. "Centennial Hall at Fair Park, site of the 1936 Texas Centennial celebration in Dallas, Texas." Photograph by Carol M. Highsmith. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress (LC-DIG-highsm- 30069 (ONLINE) [P&P]).

Figure 2. "Art deco relief, one of many at Fair Park, site of the 1936 Texas Centennial celebration and the Pan-American Exposition in 1937 in Dallas, Texas." Photograph by Carol M. Highsmith. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress (LC-DIG-highsm- 30125 (ONLINE) [P&P]).

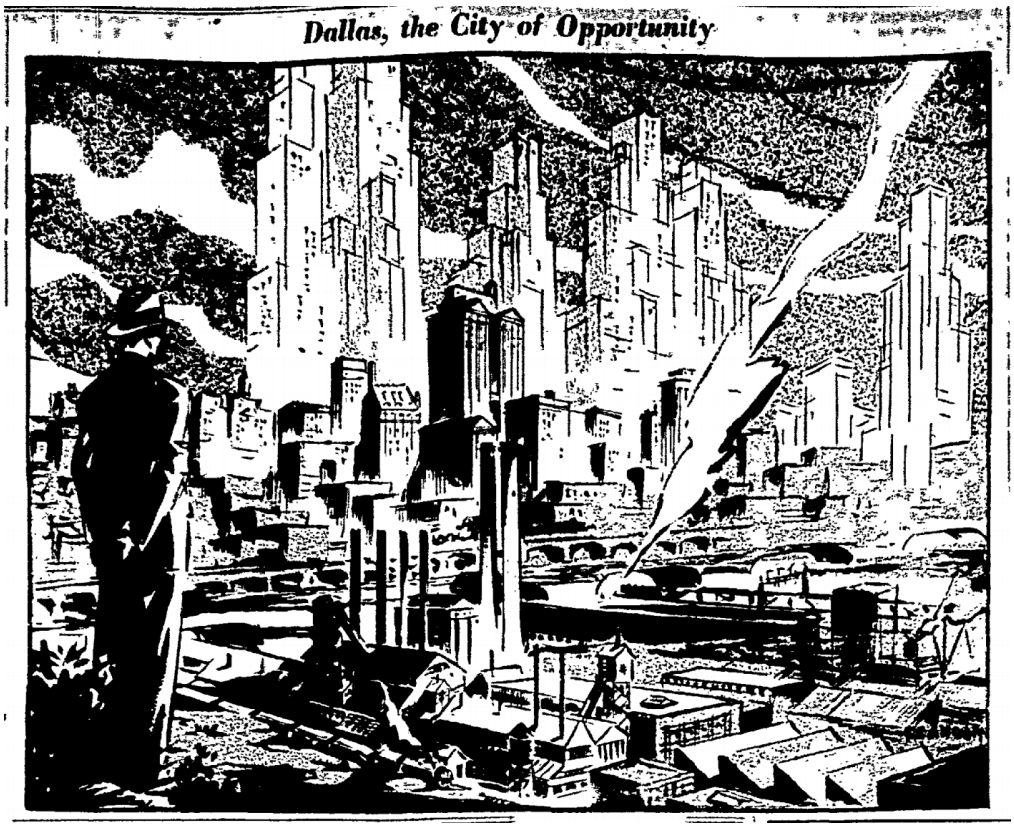


Figure 3. "Dallas, the City of Opportunity." News cartoon. *Dallas Morning News* (7 October 1934): 16.

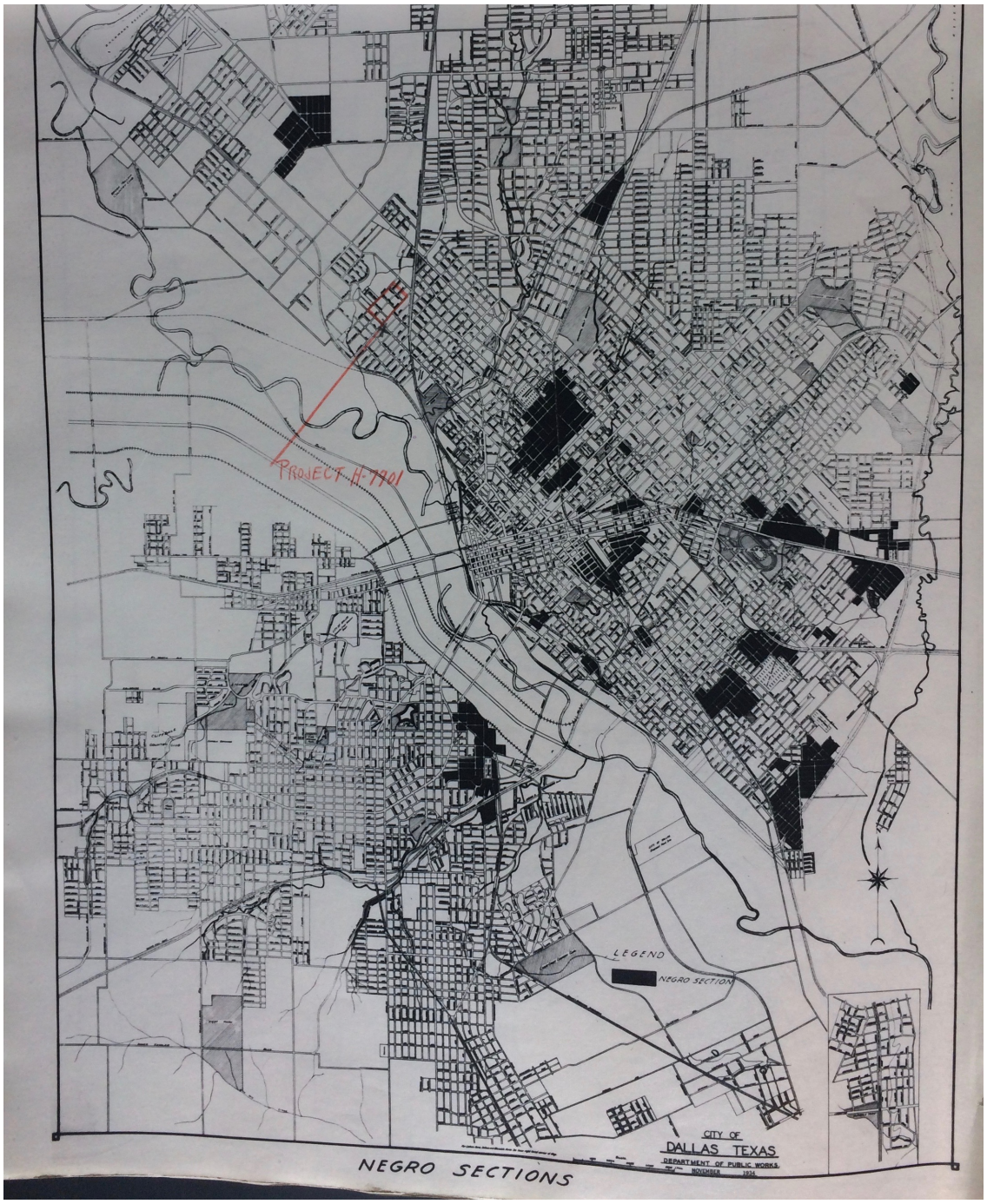


Figure 4. Planning Project, Dallas County Relief Board. "Negro Sections." In the Blighted Area Survey of Dallas, Texas (1935). Folder H-7900; Public Housing Administration Project Files (1933-1939); Public Works Administration, Record Group 196; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

Figure 5. Planning Project, Dallas County Relief Board. "[Untitled, Slum photograph]." In the Blighted Area Survey of Dallas, Texas (1935). Folder H-7900; Public Housing Administration Project Files (1933-1939); Public Works Administration, Record Group 196; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

Figure 6. Cedar Springs Place. Aerial Photograph. Date Unknown. http://www.dallasobserver.com/news/for-sale-a-1937-look-at-pwa-low-rent-housing-project-off-maple-that-still-stands-7127233

Figure 7. "Cedar Springs Place, Public Housing in Dallas, Texas." PA85-16/6. From the collections of the Dallas History and Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.

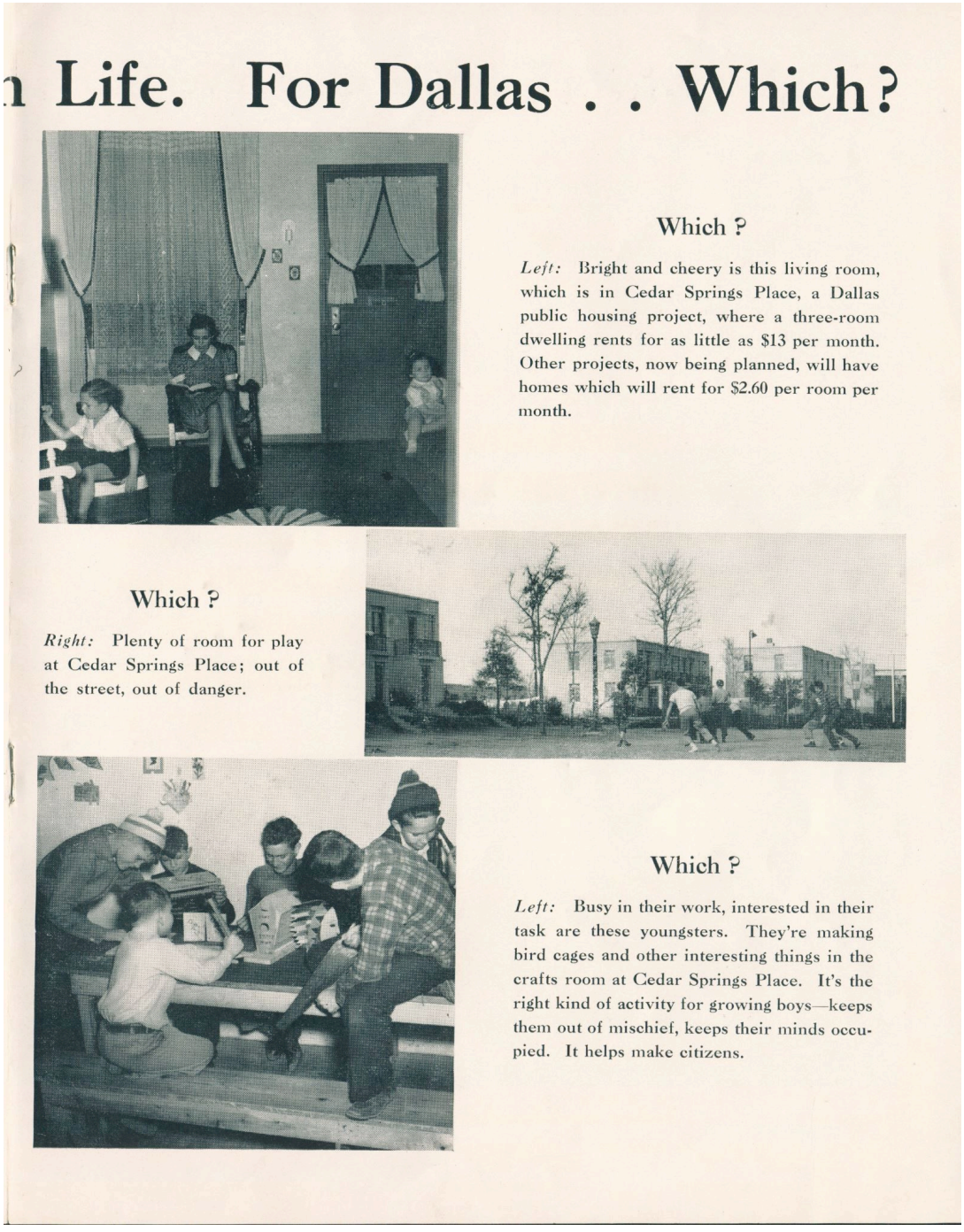


Figure 8A. Housing Authority of the City of Dallas. "Why Public Housing in Dallas." 331.83 H842. From the collections of the Dallas History and Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.

Figure 8B. Children Watching a Puppet Show. Photograph. MA91.3/253. 9/12/39 Recreation. From the collections of the Dallas History and Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.

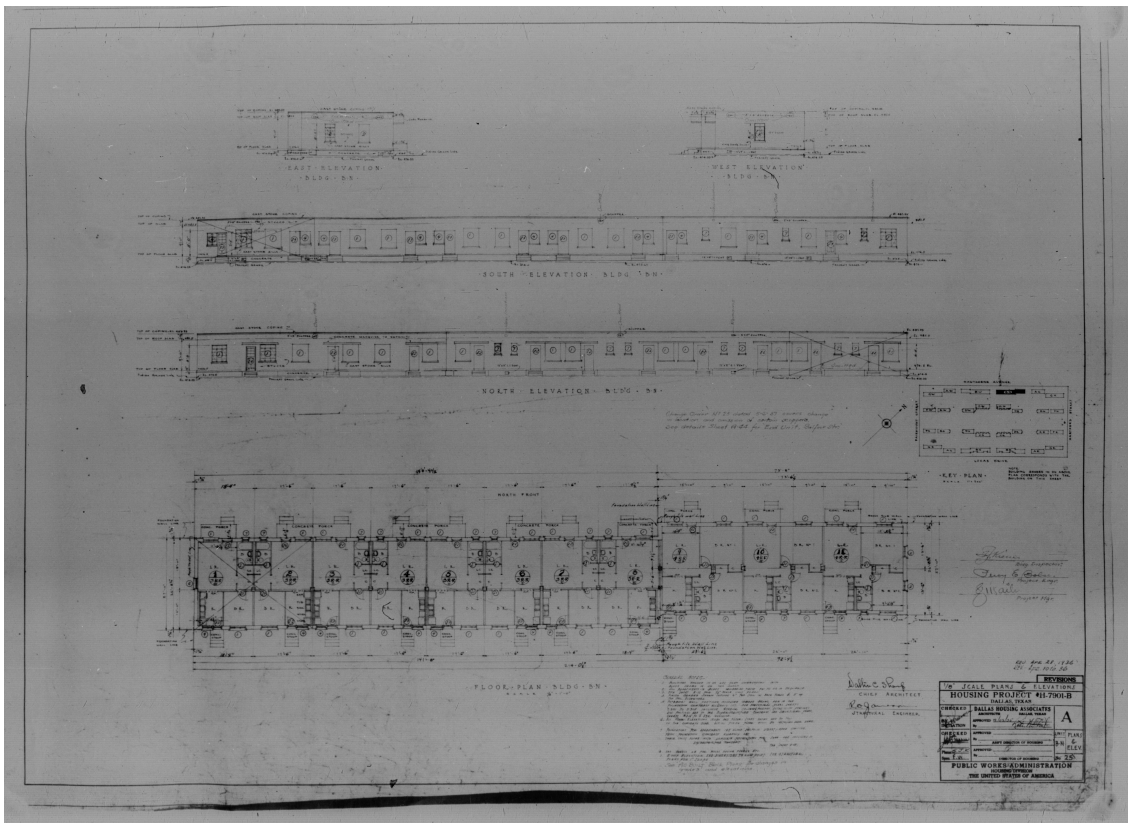


Figure 9A. Dallas Housing Associates. "South Elevation" and "North Elevation" Drawings (Single-story structures). Architectural drawings. Public Works Administration (25 December 1935). H-7901-B. Record Group 196: PWA 1933-36. National Archives at College Park, MD.

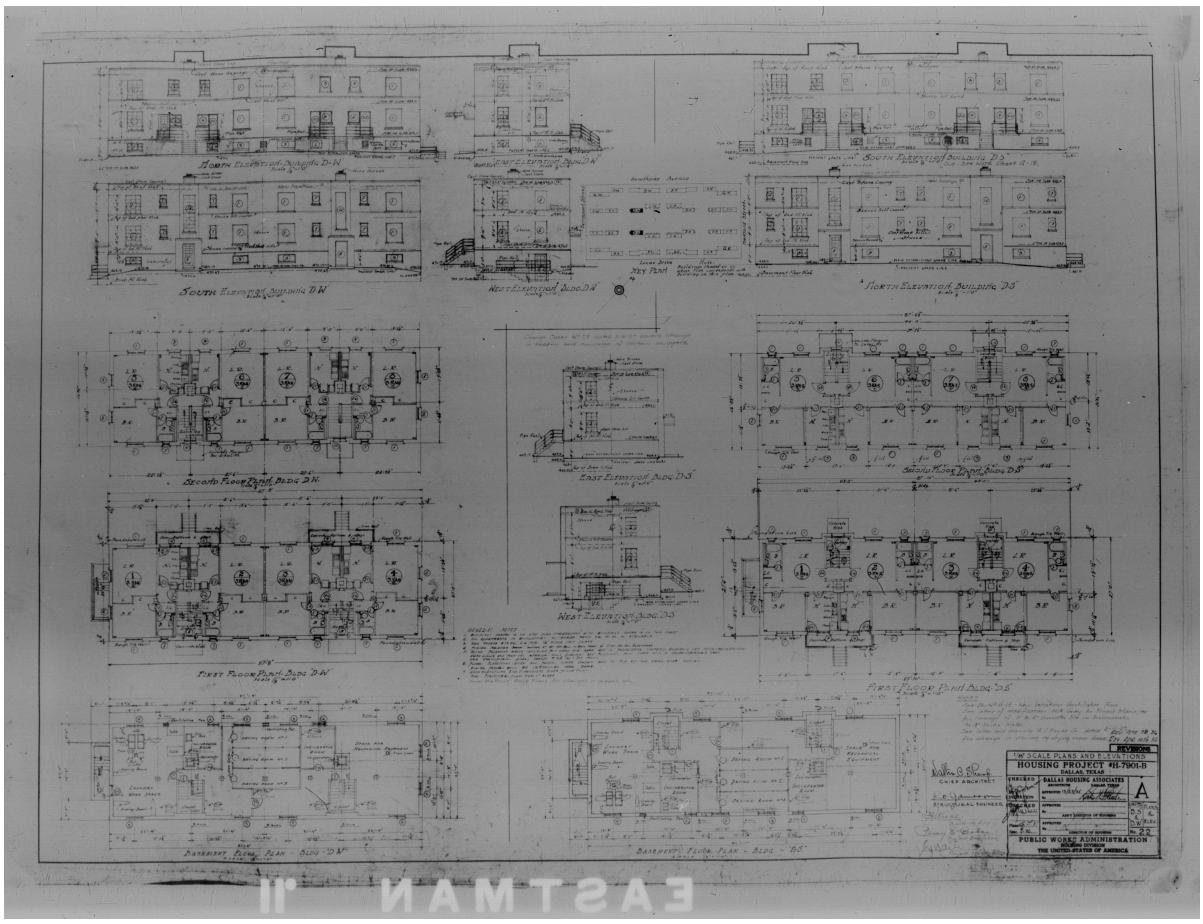
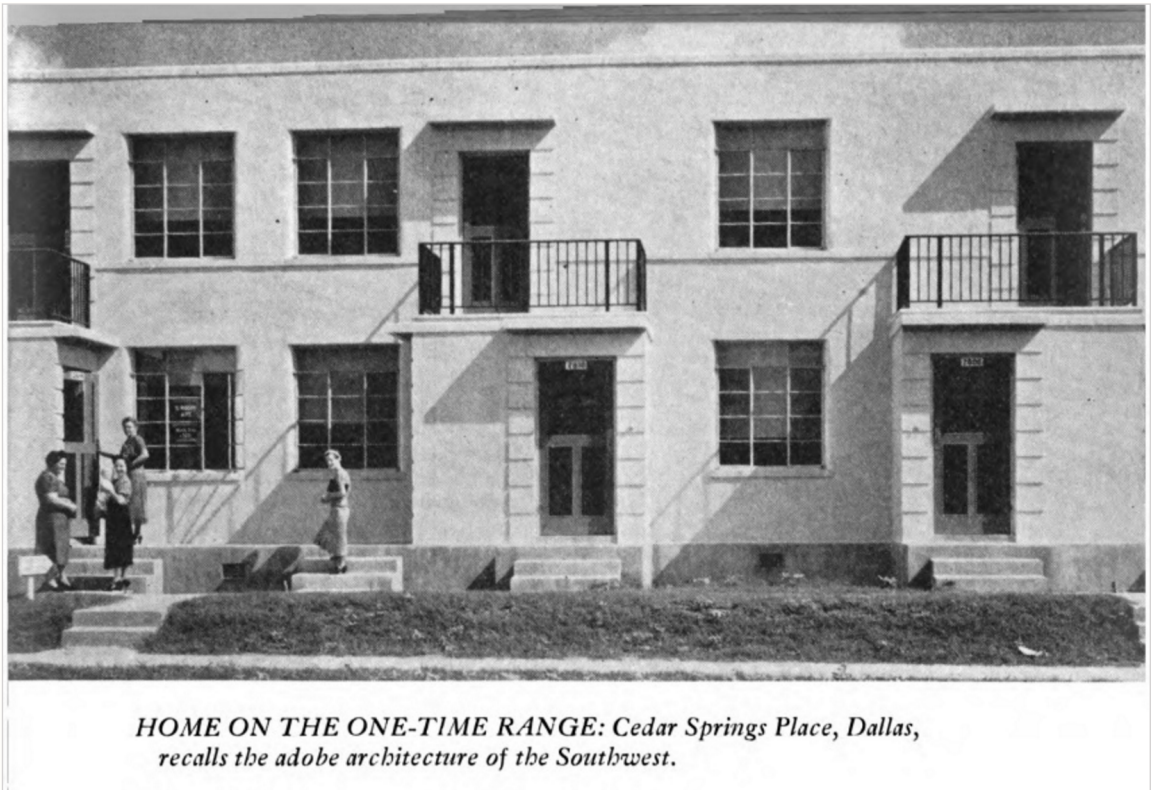


Figure 9B. Dallas Housing Associates. "South Elevation" and "North Elevation" Drawings (Double-story units with basement). Architectural drawing. Public Works Administration (25 December 1935). H-7901-B. Record Group 196: PWA 1933-36. National Archives at College Park, MD.



HOME ON THE ONE-TIME RANGE: Cedar Springs Place, Dallas, recalls the adobe architecture of the Southwest.

Figure 9C. Strauss, Michael W. & Talbott Wegg. "Home on the one-time range," photograph of two story units with balcony. In *Housing Comes of Age*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1938.

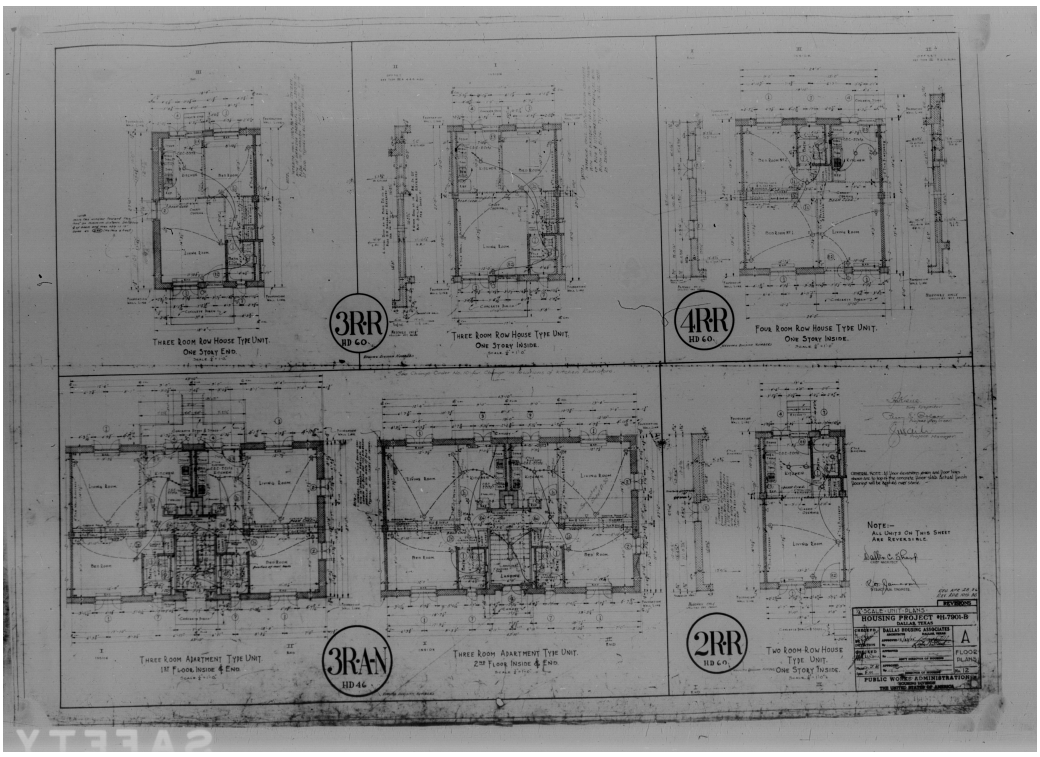


Figure 10. Dallas Housing Associates. Floor Plans. Architectural drawing. Public Works Administration (25 December 1935). H-7901-B. Record Group 196: PWA 1933-36. National Archives at College Park, MD.

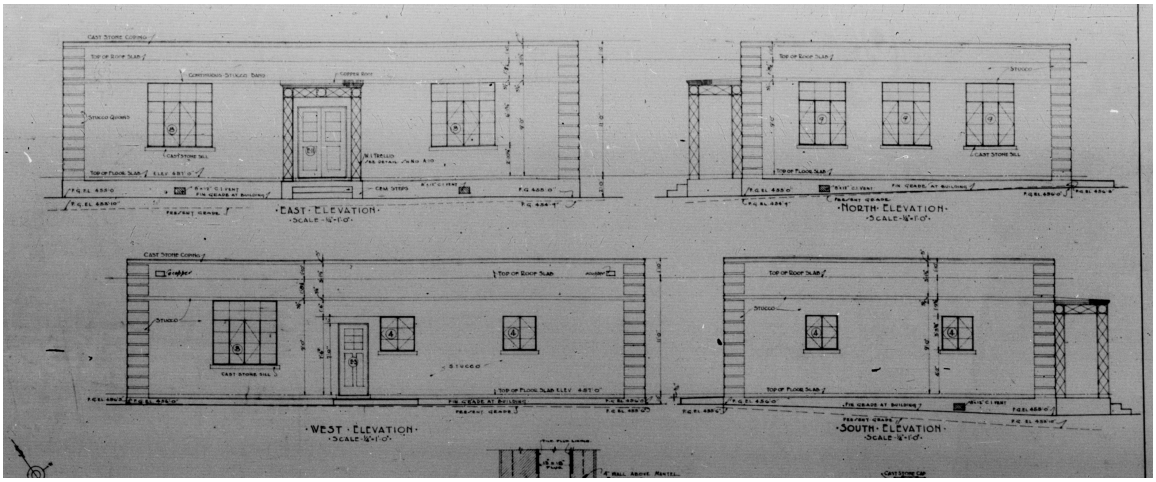


Figure 11. Dallas Housing Associates. Community Center, Elevation. Architectural drawing. Public Works Administration (25 December 1935). H-7901-B. Record Group 196: PWA 1933-36. National Archives at College Park, MD.

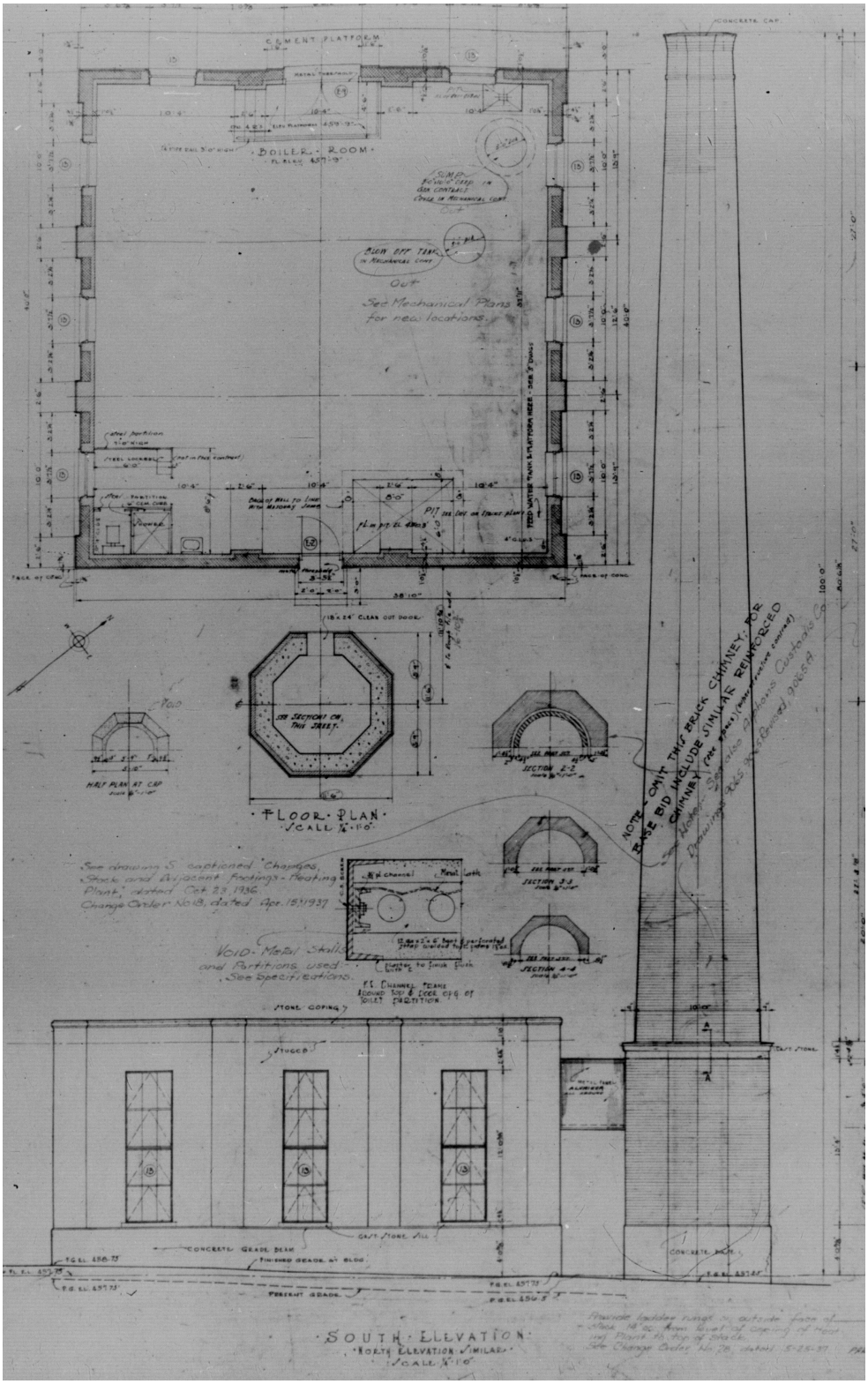


Figure 12. Dallas Housing Associates. Heating Plant, Elevation. Architectural drawing. Public Works Administration (25 December 1935). H-7901-B. Record Group 196: PWA 1933-36. National Archives at College Park, MD.

Figure 13. Charles Eames, the Dean House (Mason, Webster Groves, MO). Photography by Andrew Raimist. Image courtesy of the photographer.

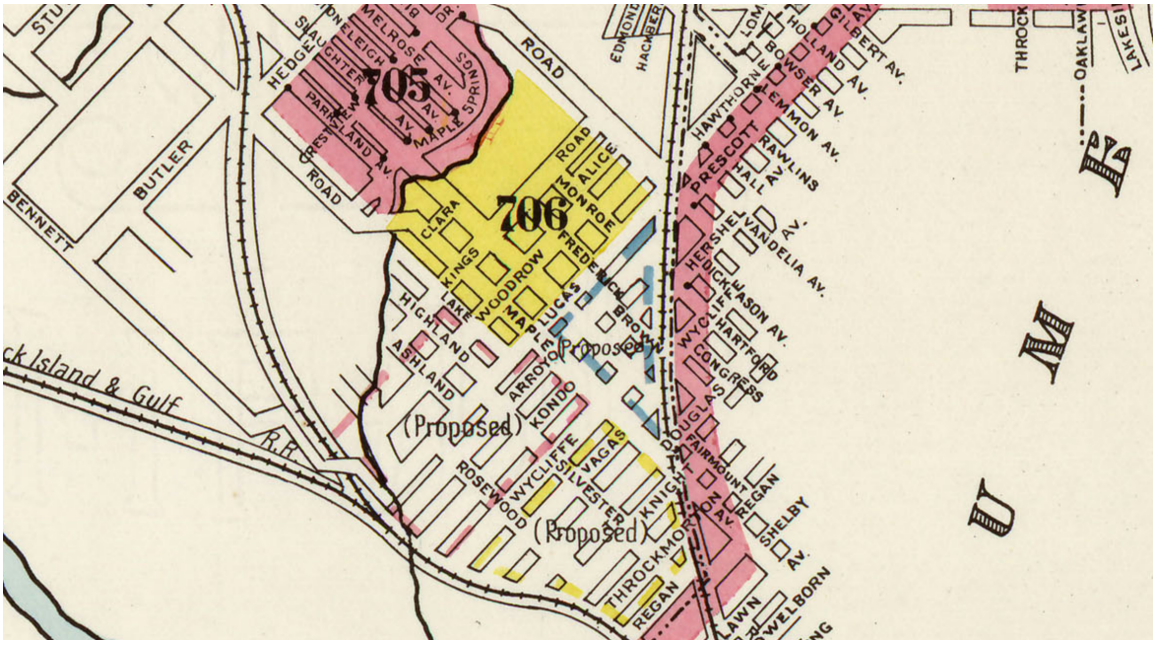
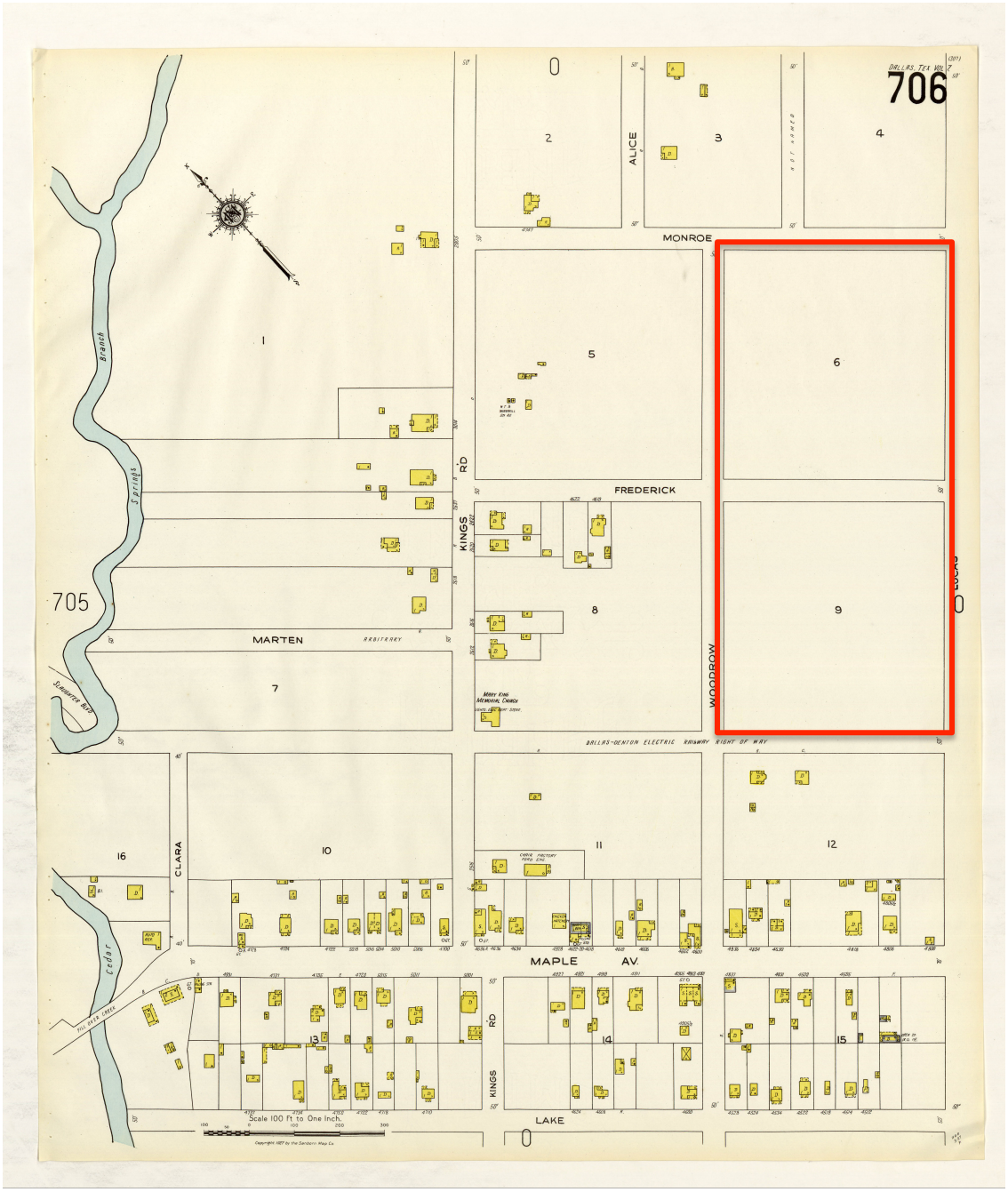


Figure 14A. *Dallas, Texas* [map]. 1927. Vol. 6, Key No. 2. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin.



Original located at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

Figure 14B. *Dallas, Texas* [map]. 1927. Vol. 7, Sheet No. 706. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin. The eventual boundary line for Cedar Springs Place is labeled in red.

Figure 15. "Old Parkland Hospital Area, Oak Lawn Avenue - Maple Avenue (Labeled)." 1930-10. Dallas Historical Aerial Photographs, Edwin J. Foscue Map Library, Southern Methodist University. The eventual property boundary of Cedar Springs Place is labeled in red.

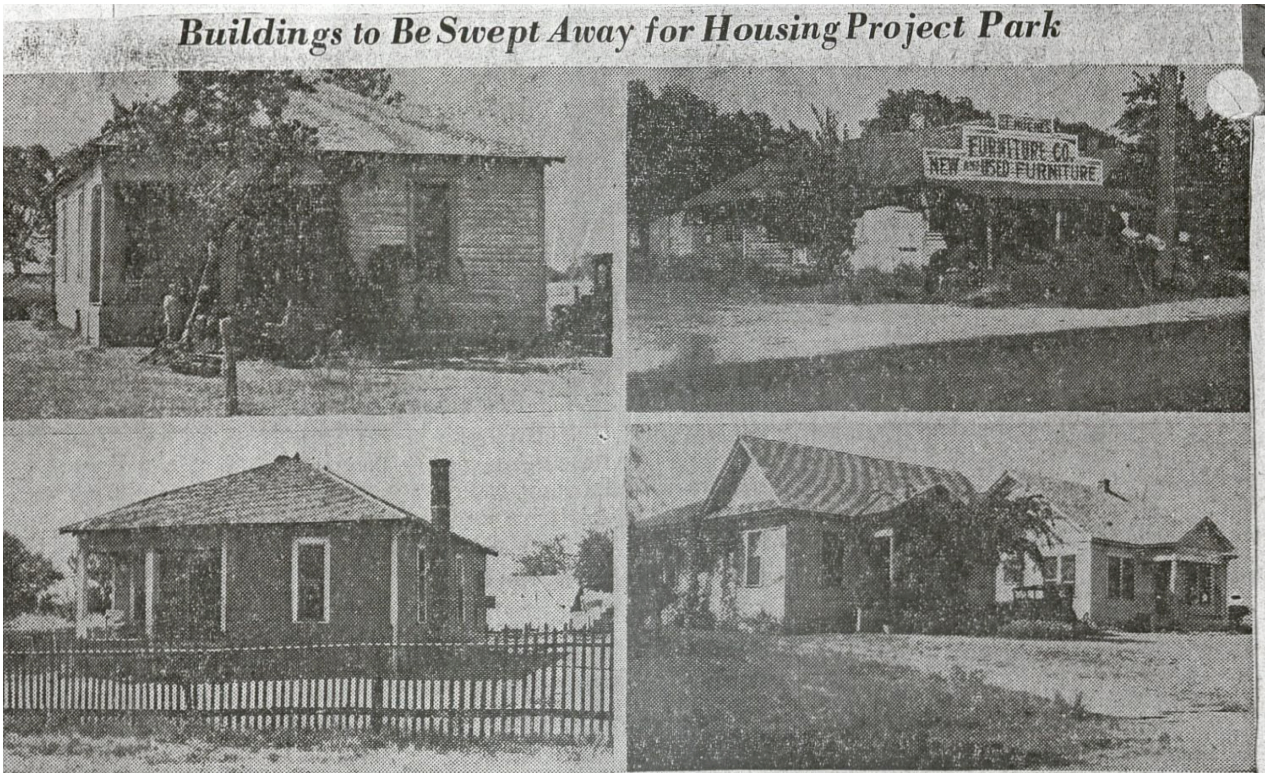


Figure 16. "Buildings to be Swept Away for Housing Project Park." *Dallas Morning News* (11 August 1938).

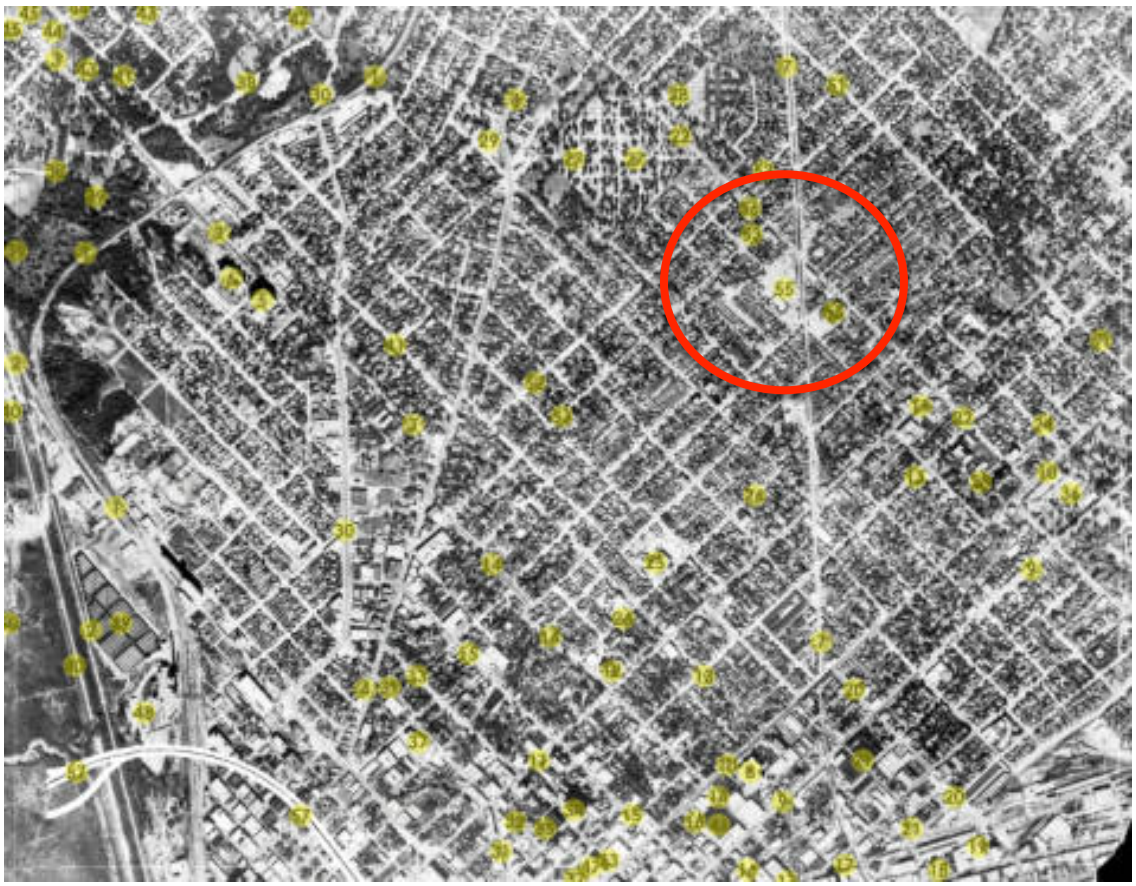
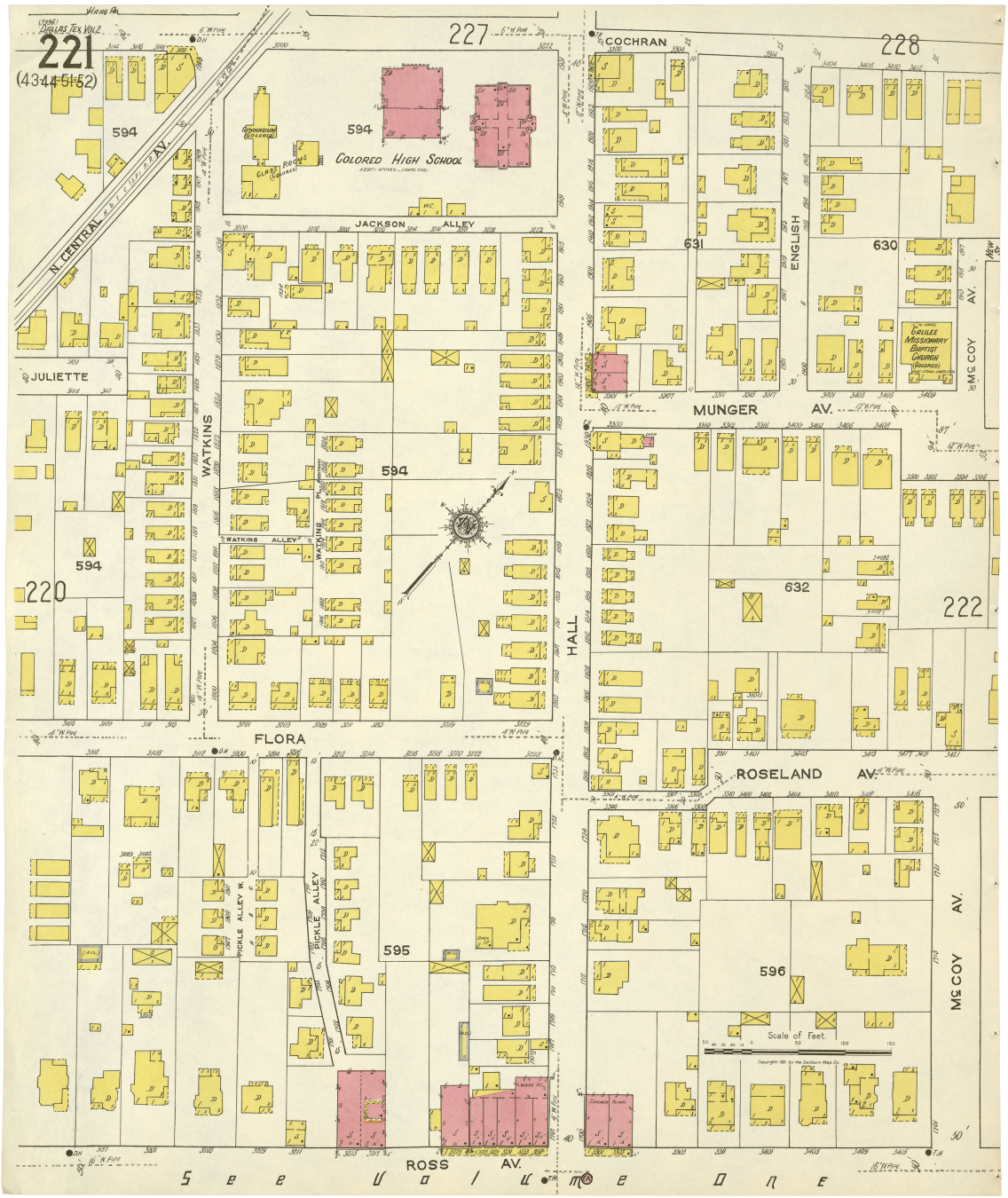


Figure 17."Downtown Dallas (Labeled)."
Showing "State / Thomas / Hall African American Business - shopping area." 1930-10. Dallas Historical Aerial Photographs, Edwin J. Foscue Map Library, Southern Methodist University. Neighborhood labeled with red circle.



Original located at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

Figure 18A. *Dallas, Texas* [map]. 1921. Vol. 2, Sheet 221. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

Figure 18B. *Dallas, Texas* [map]. 1951. Vol. 1A, sheet 5A. ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps.

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